

Fort Ward Park – Public Comments Received February 18 – March 13, 2009

Ms. Durham, with reference to the press release below, it is my understanding that the purpose of this meeting is that a few people want to walk on the Fort Ward park soccer field in peace and quiet and ban the Alexandria Master's Soccer League from playing soccer there on Saturday nights. It's a soccer field. Our games start at 6 pm and are over by 10 pm. There's over a hundred people playing in our adult master's soccer league, nearly 95% of whom live in the City. We have no other outlet for team sports. As it now stands, we are the lowest priority in the City for recreation and can only play when no other team needs the fields. This generally limits us to Saturday and Sunday night. The City spent money on this playing field, and it should be used as a playing field.

I've cc'd some of the leaders of our group and I've bcc'd the members of city council on this email.

Dear Ms Durham,

I am emailing to urge you to support the use of the Ft Ward soccer by the Alexandria Masters Soccer League. This league uses the field only at times not needed by youth sports. The league supports community in a very effective way in Alexandria, as groups of adults from all parts of the city meet and play in a recreational setting. This league uses the field for its intended purpose and is very respectful of the facility. Not only are the events beneficial for the participants but also for families, who watch and socialize.

Dear Ms. Durham,

As an Alexandria tax-payer for the past 15 years, I am writing to add my voice in support of the Master's Soccer League at Fort Ward. I played last season and it was a great opportunity for a lot of Alexandria parents to get out there and enjoy the game in a light competitive atmosphere. Many of the participants, like me, support the city sports leagues as coaches for their own kids' teams. It was a nice change of pace to enjoy the resources for our own use in this case.

I am told that there are some who feel the soccer games detract from the peace and quiet at night. Although I confess I questioned a call or two by the ref one game, I feel that by and large everyone involved was civil and considerate. There were no large noisy crowds (generally about a dozen family members if we were lucky), nor was there a lot of high-impact traffic. We parked in the lot, went to the field, and had a good time with a bunch of other over the hill jocks. No booming bass speakers, no tail-gating, no drunken brawls. In fact, our night-time schedule seemed to make excellent use of the city's limited greenswards in off-peak hours. I urge you to support an equitable plan for park use that preserves Fort Ward field for Master's soccer.



Dear Ms. Durham,

I understand there is a meeting Feb. 18 to discuss the use of the Ford Ward soccer field. Specifically, I understand there are residents who want to ban evening games and remove the lights. Also that some would like to use the field for walking/exercise, and the soccer teams are getting in their way.

I am a soccer player on this Master's league and have lived in the City of Alexandria for 13 years. I am a mother and have two young children.

Alexandria has spent a significant amount of money to build this field and install lights. The Alexandria Master's Soccer League, to date, plays only weekend evening games and currently has no practice time on any fields in Alexandria. There are over 100 players, mostly residents, who LOVE this league.

I find it hard to believe that

A) from a wellness standpoint, the City would support the elimination of a healthy and community building activity for (mostly) parents in Alexandria

B) from a tax standpoint, the City would prevent so many taxpayers from using City facilities that have been build using taxpayer dollars

C) from a financial standpoint, the City would remove equipment (lights) that have already been approved and paid for by City residents

D) the City can find funds, field space, and willing neighbors to develop dog-walking only open space, but that providing open space for adult athletes is so difficult

Bottom line... the field was built for soccer use. Lights were installed for evening play. All we are asking is to use this field as it was intended, during the Spring and Fall soccer season. We have accepted last priority - and agree that putting the youth athletes of Alexandria first is the right thing to do.



Dear Ms. Durham

I am both an adult soccer player and a pedestrian in the city of Alexandria. I have lived and played soccer here all of my life and it has always been a struggle to find adequate playing fields to meet the needs of all the teams. I am also a runner/walker and I have found more than ample sidewalks, bike paths and beautiful neighborhoods and parks to meet my pedestrian needs. It would be a crime to limit the playing time on the beautiful LIGHTED fields in which the city has invested much money. We should strive to get as much playing time as we can possibly squeeze out of these limited number of fields. The city has also invested much money on making pedestrian traffic more safe on the streets with the "traffic calmers" and crosswalks. Let us continue to use these resources for their intended purposes and allow us all to enjoy the benefits of our tax dollars at work. Thank you for your attention and all of your work on this matter.

Ms. Durham,

I understand that a group of citizens have petitioned the city to limit the use of the soccer field at Ft. Ward park and potentially remove the lights which allow for nighttime play. I strongly oppose this effort and encourage the city to retain the current use of the field with no limitations.

As a city resident, I greatly appreciate the opportunity to utilize this field, as do many others. Considering that the field is proximate to Interstate 395, is not within any reasonable distance of homes, and provides ample parking opportunities, I fail to see how the field (and the lights) negatively affect the residents in question. As a working professional, I am often unable to utilize the city soccer fields during the day. Night is often the only time many of us can play, and we pay for the privilege to do so (this winter each member of our soccer club paid \$45, more than \$900 total, to use the fields for one hour a week in the month of February).

If necessary, I am more than happy to testify publicly at one of the upcoming meetings on this subject. If that is necessary, please let me know at your soonest convenience so I can make appropriate plans to participate. Many thanks.

Ms. Durham,

I understand that a group of citizens have petitioned the city to limit the use of the soccer field at Ft. Ward park and potentially remove the lights which allow for nighttime play. I strongly oppose this effort and encourage the city to retain the current use of the field with no limitations.

As a city resident, and a participant in Alexandria Master's Soccer League, I greatly appreciate the opportunity to utilize this field, as do many others. Considering that the field is proximate to Interstate 395, is not within any reasonable distance of homes, and provides ample parking opportunities, I fail to see how the field (and the lights) negatively affects the residents in question.



Moreover, it wouldn't be fair to deny so many city residents access to the field – the Master's Soccer League has 6 teams – just because a few people have expressed concerns – especially at a time when so many sports, leagues and teams vie for the limited number of fields available throughout the city. As a working professional and parent, like most of the players in the League, weekend nights are the only time many of us can play, and we pay for the privilege to do so.

The Alexandria Master's Soccer League is a popular, growing and positive community activity. The Mayor himself has been out to games showing his support for the league. The turf field at Ft. Ward is an ideal place for the league to play. The artificial surface really cuts down on injuries. The few times we have played at Hensley field, players have turned ankles and experienced other serious injuries because of the poor surface.

If necessary, I am more than happy to testify publicly at one of the upcoming meetings on this subject. If that is necessary, please let me know at your soonest convenience so I can make appropriate plans to participate. Many thanks.

Hope you are doing well. I wanted to send you a note regarding the upcoming meeting on Fort Ward.

Fort Ward is historically significant both as a Civil War fort built for the defense of Washington, D.C. and as the home of the freed slaves and their descendants who lived at the Fort. There are still descendant families living near the Oakland Baptist Church.

Fort Ward is one of the very few public historic sites in the West End. I have been concerned with a steady, and to me, an insensitive desecration of the historic park.

I had a chance to see the Powerpoint Presentation (Fort Ward Process Update) and felt there was a misunderstanding of what are improvements. The recently relocated "trash" enclosure, prominently located on the circular drive, pre-formed concrete speed bumps and a portable, metal "security" booth are not really improvements to the Park. Also visitors would not view the maintenance yard as a horticultural or nursery center. The Clare Adams gravestone in the gated-chain link fence maintenance yard is difficult to understand given her contribution to the African American heritage at the Park and at the Oakland Baptist Church.

These types of improvements are inconsistent with the character of the historic park and represent a real loss in the visitor's experience. We can do much better.

I realize there is increased demand for parks and that it is often used for special events. However, it is a historic area with a post Civil War African American settlement and cemetery and a Civil War Fort. It is a wonderful resource that is being threatened by overuse and the City should be commended for soliciting public input and developing a badly needed management plan.



Proposed improvements in operation and maintenance of the park and better rental policies will be very helpful. This would reduce the need for additional parking, greater security and would help protect the African-American sites and the Fort.

I hope the Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities and the Office of Historic Alexandria will revisit and change the Power Point presentation. Correcting the oversight will enhance discussion and improve the likely hood of public supported solutions.

I'm President of the Little Theatre of Alexandria and we were part of the City's Thursday night music series. It was an enjoyable evening for all...the cast and crew as well as the Patrons.

We had over 750 people and would like to do it again if the City was willing to support LTA by paying for City Staff, Police (if needed), arrange overflow parking at the schools and close the Park down that night for this event due to the parking situation.

Ft Ward is another "gem" in this City that the Citizens of Alexandria should know about.

If improvements are to be made it would be at the amphitheatre. Need better lighting and sound capabilities for performances.

Hi Laura: Our facility is located across from the park and St Steven/Agnes... and we use the park every year for our Lynn House staff picnic.

One thing that we would really like to see are more tables at the larger sites, that can be moved around so a large group such as ours (generally 50 to 70 people), can sit near each other while they eat, and so that we can group tables a certain way: main pot-luck dishes here, desserts there; kids crafts over there etc.... As it is now, the tables are really heavy and awkward and some cannot be moved... We always clean up really well and put the tables back as best we can, so that would never be an issue for us.

Also refurbishing the fire pits and the grill tops and side tables on the grills would be very nice. Some are so rusted out that things cannot be put on them...and the fire rings cannot be relocated because they are so rusty.

On a different note, I would like to say that the park staff have been fantastic to us every time we have been there, whether it was for the picnic or for a musical event in the evening. One time park staff stayed late to help us by not locking up and staying because we had to make 2 trips to take our residents home in the car after a concert. They have always been wonderful.

We would really like to have an enclosed dog park at Fort Ward. We visit the park in Fairlington which has a couple of picnic tables and some benches. It also has a shelter which is great for the dog owners. Thank you for your consideration.



I am writing in response to your invitation for comments regarding possible changes in the facilities and operations of Fort Ward. I will not be able to attend any of the three scheduled community meetings due to prior commitments out of town.

My wife Kitty and I have lived in the City of Alexandria since 1974. We raised three daughters in the City.

We feel strongly that the City should preserve--indeed, foster-- the historical character of the Fort, including the Museum. We are greatly concerned that the City may be planning to expand recreational facilities in the park, devalue the park's historical character, and deprive residents of a rare peaceful retreat within the City.

We were first attracted to Alexandria by its history, and our interest in the City's history is a major reason that we have stayed for 35 years. Fort Ward, in particular, has contributed significantly to the quality of life here for our family. We rented an apartment in the Fort Ward Towers (overlooking the park) for a few years and then bought a house nearby. During that 21-year span, we frequently visited the Fort with our daughters to enjoy the open space and peacefulness as well as to talk about history. The Fort remains an important stop on our tours of the City with out-of-town visitors. Without fail, our visitors are pleasantly surprised by the many historical places preserved in the City. Many had no idea that the City was the site of so many historical events and the home of so many historical figures. Recently, our daughters (now adults) have been bringing their out-of-town visitors to the Fort and Museum, reflecting their generation's growing interest in the City's heritage.

We were recently reminded of the value of Fort Ward when the history of our development became a popular subject of discussion among neighbors on the Seminary Ridge ListServ. Two other Civil War forts--Ft. Worth and Ft. Williams--were situated on land on which the development was built in the 1970s. Little evidence of either of those forts remains beyond historical markers. Fort Ward is the sole survivor.

In sum, we urge that the City not make any changes to Fort Ward that would devalue its historical, peaceful character.

Please don't cut our time on the soccer fields. The Alexandria Master's Soccer League has allowed me to re-connect with a sport I have not played since I was at T.C. Williams and to re-connect with old friends. We have limited time on the fields and do not have many options. I am hoping that you will not restrict use of the field at Ft. Ward Park.

Dear Ms Durham,

I did not have a chance to attend the meeting last night but here are my suggestions for improving the park.

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1) People are supposed to keep their dogs on a leash when walking them in the park. A lot of people do not follow this but let their dogs run free. There is only one tiny sign in the whole park where all the park rules are listed, and it is located at the inner parking lot on the left when you enter the park. It is too small, has too much stuff on it and it is too hard to read for cars going by.

You need several more signs, not with all the rules, but separate signs “dogs must be kept on leash” throughout the park, particularly along the driveway. I walk in the park all the time and I do not appreciate dogs come racing up, it is sometimes quite frightening. This is a serious problem and I really hope something can be done about it.

2) I would also like a distance sign somewhere in the park stating the distance once around the park/driveway. How far is it?

3) After 9 am on weekends there are too many cars cruising around the drive way. Sometimes not going anywhere, just driving around. Is there anyway there could be parking only in the two parking lots and not at the picnic areas? It is not very healthy trying to get your exercise while breathing in the fumes from all the cars going around and around the park.

Dear Ms. Durham,

I am writing to urge you to continue supporting evening soccer games at Fort Ward Park with lighted fields. Night games are necessary because of the ever-shrinking number of athletic fields in the City of Alexandria. For some soccer leagues, evening slots at Fort Ward are the only openings offered and without the availability, some leagues would cease to exist.

I hope you will also consider the following modest changes, which would minimize the disruption evening soccer may cause to Fort Ward residents:

1. Build a restroom closer to the field.
2. Pave the parking lot adjacent to the field to allow for more parking.
3. Add a small play area for kids so they can play safely while soccer games are played.

Ft. Ward Park -- Nighttime Soccer League

I, along with many other Alexandria men and women, play soccer at night at Ft. Ward Park, and I just wanted to write to tell you how important and valuable it is to city residents to allow use of these facilities at night. Given work schedules, if the fields were not open and the lights not on, adults could simply not play soccer. Thank you for doing your part to keep them open.



Ft Ward Turf Soccer Field

Dear Mr. Kincannon,

In the aftermath of last night's park public hearing--which I could not attend because I was using the field last night--I wanted to present my thoughts on the issue. The Masters Soccer League has been a huge boon for many Alexandria residents and frankly, the only all city community organization that many of us have joined. It has formed new affiliations, comraderie and even political activism. With each season the program has grown vigorously and we hope the city will continue to support this community initiative. The Ft Ward turf field has been a vital part of the league's success largely due to its mitigation of injury risk and its night lights. The latter has allowed us to play into the evening after a long day of chaufferring our kids to games and parties. We encourgae the city to continue to support this great opportunity for civic and community engagement at a time when these opportunities are rapidly dissappearing. It is this engagement that will continue to make Aleandria a peerless and thriving community for families.

Thank you for your attention and support.



Ft. Ward Park & lights

Kirk-

I am one of the founders of the Masters Soccer League and also the Recreation Commissioner of ASA. Needless to say, I like soccer. Over the past year, we have organized what was a fledgling league into a social/sport league that now has 160+ members, all but one Alexandria residents and all aged 35+. We are responsible Alexandrians and value the fields that the city has so generously made available to us. We play both in the spring and fall and quite often use Ft. Ward at night.

Unfortunately I was not able to make the meeting last night, but wanted to express my concern regarding Ft. Ward. I am worried that our league may be in jeopardy if the lights on Ft. Ward field were somehow restricted. Our league takes whatever time is available after all youth leagues have been scheduled, which usually leaves us with weekend evenings. Priority is given to the youth, which is great, as most of them belong to us anyway. It seems a symbiotic relationship that is working for all.

I know that you need to hear from as many of us as possible and have asked my fellow teammates to contact your office. Thank you for your hard work and for supporting our city fields.



Masters Soccer - use of Fields and Lights and Night

Hi Kirk -

I am an 18-year resident of Alexandria City, local business owner (www.forumone.com), have 3 school age kids attending ACPS, and have spent many many hours as a parent spectator on the sidelines of rec soccer games on Alexandria fields. And I have been *thrilled* to be able to play myself this past year in the Alexandria Masters Soccer League. I wanted to let you know that I believe strongly:

- the Masters soccer league is wonderful - it's really great for the participants and the city

- building healthy habits, comradery, civic connections between people, etc.

- being able to play on the Ft. Ward field at night is great. The field is very nice and the lights allow us to play in the evening – which is convenient for many of us who work during normal business hours. I hope that if there are any concerns about the use of this, or other fields, at night and with lights- that we adult sports league folks will have a chance to offer our perspectives.

Evening soccer at Ft Ward

Sir

I am a member of the Alexandria Masters soccer league and I am writing you for the purpose of allowing continued evening soccer matches under the lights. This program is growing and continues to be very popular--- the Fort Ward field is well suited to our needs. Please do not eliminate the soccer under the lights at Ft. Ward. Thank you for your consideration.

Thank you for the use of FT. WARD Turf Field

I enjoy using the Ft. Ward field as a member of the ASA Adult Soccer League. I am a St. Stephen's mother, and it makes me feel like I am able to enjoy a portion of my Alexandria taxes spent on an outdoor field as such. I only have been able to use the field at night for games and I really see it as a perk of living in Alexandria to have the ability to play on such a field.



Ft. Ward Field

Dear Mr. Kincannon:

My family and I are Alexandria residents and make extensive use of Ft. Ward field including my playing in the Master's League in the evenings. We are grateful for the existence of this field and strongly believe that its use in the evening is appropriate. We further believe that providing this type of facility for adults to use in non-business hours is exactly the kind of service that the City of Alexandria should provide its residents. We also support the "turfing" of additional fields in the city to expand the playing options for all residents as well as possibly increase the income from fees for the city. Please let me know what we can do to further support Ft. Ward field and the city's recreation programs.

We love the events at Fort Ward, having lived here in Alexandria for thirty years and we attend the reenactments and the museum often. We feel it is a unique part of Alexandria's historical context and something that must be cherished, preserved and protected. If there are those who disagree, they must come second to an already existing park and resource---that is, if they are bothered by traffic and noise they knew about it when they purchased their houses. This park is just too special and wonderful to have it watered down and diminished in any way.

Ms. Durham,

I am not able to attend the community meetings so I am writing to give the city my comments/suggestions/concerns regarding Fort Ward Park.

As I dog owner I greatly appreciate having an off-leash area of the park in our community. We use this area everyday and it is extremely valuable to us as there are few spaces available that allow my dog to play off leash. However, the location of the dog area in Ft. Ward park is of great concern to me. It is in a very dangerous location of the park. It backs directly onto a busy four lane road with no fence or barriers. What makes this even more concerning is that the leash-free area is slopped downward toward this busy street. Any ball, etc thrown immediately rolls towards cars/traffic. This situation could be corrected by several options: 1) put up a fence/barrier along the edge of the dog park area that borders this busy road 2) landscape the area so there is no longer a slope heading down to the road or 3) move the area to another part of the park. Additionally, I have had people walking their dogs on the sidewalk next to the street who are able to leap up into this leash-free area because they are on long leashes. These are often aggressive dogs that should not be able to cross over into this area so easily. Some type of barrier

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would between the street and the park would prevent this problem. Additionally, there are many other areas of the park that the off-leash area could be more appropriately placed (for example: to the right as you pass the museum).

Thank you for your attention to this matter,

We use the park for walking several times a week and have noticed the changes already taking place there. We have reserved picnic sites for family events several times and appreciate its availability. We heard informally that the City of Alexandria is considering establishment of this park as its arboretum, and have wondered if this is correct. These are our comments:

Walking/Dog Walking - We very much appreciate and use this facility frequently. We hope the venue will continue to be open to all. Last summer when the cars were prohibited from driving around the circle (unless slated for a picnic reservation) it was great. Cars are so quiet today, that it is often difficult to hear them come upon you when you are walking. We support this change between Memorial Day and Labor Day, even if only on weekends. It promotes a safe environment for all. Cannon fire is not compatible with animals. Thank you for limiting it to 2 times a year!

Dog Park - When the dog park was relocated to the back, it lost usage. There is nothing attractive about it. We use it, but it is underutilized. One improvement would be to put the fence back along the back side. An errant run into traffic could be a disaster along Van Dorn St. We are responsible with our dog, and I have watched other owners at Ft Ward throughout the years. Most dog owners are conscientious and mannerly there. I know you will get comments to the contrary, but we spend 3 hours there every weekend, and have never had or seen a problem.

Arboretum - It would be a great thing to designate Ft. Ward as a "special" park if this does not change the current access for all. We have noticed many tree/shrub removals over the past few years, but few new tree plantings. With finances low, is there any way we could help? We would love to donate a tree to help replenish the park. Maybe others would too. If there were a formal process, contributions might help you fulfill your future planting plans.

Picnic sites - Is there any way to monitor the people trash more closely? I pick-up trash there every weekend, especially around the trash containers. There is broken glass in the ground at most of the picnic sites. I know park staff can't be there at night when some of this trash appears, but it should be acknowledged that picnickers and visitors need education about littering (fines?). We have made several reservations and have paid the \$50 fee and that seems easy and an acceptable amount. Written confirmations would be helpful and/or a way to make the reservation (and pay) online would be great.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to comment. On behalf of our family and friends, it is a great place.....open access for all is our key message.



Fort Ward Park provides Alexandria with the great opportunity to highlight the unique spirit, character and historic identity of our City by preserving this Civil War defense of Washington DC and the sacred ground of freed Blacks who established a community here. The zest to modernize our local resources and provide recreation services to our current residents must not destroy this historic asset; it must be preserved for future generations. Fort Ward Park, unlike many other facilities maintained by the Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities, is a unique cultural attribute, an irreplaceable heritage that makes Alexandria the historic destination that attracts residents and visitors to our city.

In 1961, Alexandria recognized the value of this historic asset and began a professional reconstruction and preservation project to return the fort to its authentic Civil War era appearance. Indeed, the work was so successful that according to our City's website, "Fort Ward has been cited as the best Civil War restoration/preservation project in the mid-Atlantic region, as well as the flagship of the Defenses of Washington."

Therefore, the primary goal of this Fort Ward Park plan must be preservation of this historic resource. Although this 44 acre expanse of rare, open space is tantalizing to those Park Administrators eager for precious land to conduct West End park maintenance functions, such activities particularly the use of heavy vehicles and equipment over this land threaten to erode fragile embankments, jeopardize the health of tree roots, and create inappropriate noise and traffic. Ad hoc soil deposits and grading have led to water flow redirection and problem both within and adjacent to the Park. Lack of consistent policies regarding trash collection led to major health concerns for park neighbors in adjacent Marlboro Estates, a problem that has at least temporarily been resolved. Headstones outside the Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery have been destroyed by careless disregard. The grave of one of our prominent former residents, Clara Adams now sits inside the maintenance area, fenced with numerous City vehicles parked around it—hardly respectful. The activities within the Arboretum, now referred to as the Horticultural Center, are industrial in character and inconsistent with the contemplative, historic tenor of the environment.

- The first priority of this plan should be the relocation of the horticultural activities to an alternate, industrial zoned area of the city, such as the area abutting Metro tracks at the end of South Quaker Lane.
- The land currently occupied by the Horticultural Center should be restored to open area that can be maintained easily. To the extent possible, the graves of freed Blacks should be marked showing proper, respectful treatment of human remains.
- Fort Ward is a wonderful laboratory for archeologists, and summer programs for students could be incorporated into the City's summer recreation programs.
- When funding permits, the City along with community organizations could create an interpretive trail, marked to indicate that this historic place tells a compelling story of freed Blacks immediately following their emancipation after the Civil War.



- The plan should contain an inventory and assessment of the age and health of the park's trees, and a prioritization of new plantings or replacements.
- The Parks Department needs an engineered approach to address water flow to mitigate erosion damage.
- The new noise policies for the Park have been welcome; signs in both English and Spanish posted near the entrance could help notify park users of these noise policies and of the prohibition of parking vehicles on grassy areas, use of moon bounces, dunk tanks, etc.
- Rather than funding the building of new pavilions for party rentals, the Park would benefit from acquisition and placement of additional benches along tree-lined paths. To preserve the historic integrity of the park environment, development should focus on the needs of individual and small grouped pedestrians, rather than on large group events.
- The City should complete identified repairs on deteriorating existing structures and bathrooms, bringing the park to a good state of maintenance.
- With respect to recreation users, the City could direct groups seeking reservations to those parks most appropriate for specific uses: Fort Ward for historic re-enactments/Scottish day commemoration/small groups and weddings, Ben Brenman Park for jazz festivals, large group events, including political party meetings and City worker parties; and Chinquapin for recreation oriented events, such as end of school parties/soccer club events, etc.. The \$300,000 proposed to install seven new park shelters in Fort Ward Park could be re-directed to Ben Brenman and Chinquapin that would host larger events.
- The plan for this historic park should be developed not in isolation, but in cooperation with our city archeologists, Friends of Fort Ward, Seminary Hill Association, neighbors, and other interested citizen groups and educators.

While we recognize the challenge of the Department of Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities in balancing the needs of all of Alexandria's citizens, it is incumbent on us to protect and cherish the few historic properties that remain in our densely populated landscape. The park must be treated with respect and maintenance activities located at the park that cause blight and deter from the peaceful beauty of the environment must be restricted. Fort Ward Park is a unique asset, a treasure for Alexandrians to restore and preserve.



Ft. Ward Soccer Field

I just wanted to voice my support for the Masters Soccer League and the use of the Fort Ward field for adult soccer. Having a quality field to play on prevents injuries and greatly improves the quality of the play. The Masters league is a wonderful recreation opportunity for adults in Alexandria and I hope the city will continue to support it. I had been playing in Arlington, largely due to the quality of the turf fields there, and so I am thrilled to now be able to play at Fort Ward in my own community.

Soccer Fields

Dear Mr. Kincannon,

I am writing to seek your support of the Alexandria Masters Soccer League's use of nighttime lighted fields at Ft. Ward park, request that the City build a restroom closer to the field, and that the City should pave the parking lot at the tennis court so that more people could park. Thank you for your support of active and healthy Alexandria.

Mrs. Durham,

I am not able to attend the meetings so I am emailing my concerns regarding Fort Ward Park.

One side of the park (opposite of Braddock Road) runs along a very busy road with four lanes of traffic. Yet, this area of the park is not fenced. The fence that runs between the park and the school should continue along the road and not stop. This area of the park is where many people come for picnics, etc and small children run and play in this area with no barrier between them and a very dangerous and busy road. Additionally, the dog park is in this area, which is also dangerous as there is nothing to stop a ball from rolling down onto the road and a dog from chasing it. The whole purpose of a leash free area is so that dogs can run and chase balls. Yet they are unable to do so because of the street below.

The park would be much safer for children and animals in this area was fenced.

Ms. Durham,

I am unable to attend the community meetings. Below are my ideas for facility improvements at Fort Ward Park.

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As a dog owner I use the off-leash area of the park in our community everyday. However, I am very concerned with the location of the off leash area. Since dogs must stay between the boundaries , pet owners have no choice but to use an area that slopes steeply downhill onto a extremely busy street. A ball could easily roll onto the street (and the dog would follow it) since there isn't a fenced between the park and this busy four lane street. There is many, many other areas of the park that would be more suitable for the leash free area where dogs could play freely without pet owners having to worry about the life and safety of their beloved pets. If the off leash area isn't moved, I strongly recommend putting up a fence along the area of the park that abuts the road before someone gets seriously injured.

Dear Ms. Durham:

Thank you for the City's invitation to comment on the future of Ft. Ward and its relation to surrounding residents. I've visited the park regularly since 1974; thus, my comments should be viewed against the background of a 35-year acquaintance with the park. I've lived adjacent to the park for the last 5 years at 4018 Ellicott Street. My choice of residence was based in large part on my admiration for the park. Since moving here, however, I have found enormous insensitivity by park officials, which has been corrected to some extent by recent improvements but which leaves me apprehensive about the potential for similar insensitivity in the future. Given that my home is immediately in back of the Ft. Ward maintenance facility, I feel that my location makes my home among the three or four residences most directly affected by the City's decisions with regard to the park.

In what follows, I want to provide four recommendations for your consideration, a brief background on the problems with the park and City that I encountered after moving close to Ft. Ward, and a brief set of concluding observations.

Recommendations:

(1) (1) The City should give priority to the park's role as an arboretum. In the 35 years that I've observed the park, I've seen a slow but steady deterioration of its park-related values. Trees have gotten older and been destroyed, but almost no new planting has been done. As a corollary, I've also watched such indicators as birds and bird nests dwindle drastically. For example, there used to be numerous nests, especially different species of woodpeckers' nests, but these have all but vanished. Ft. Ward is turning into a biological desert because there is no plan to safeguard its values as an arboretum and because there is a countervailing emphasis on people-only values.

(2) (2) In re-emphasizing Ft. Ward's value as the City's arboretum, there needs to be a de-emphasis on the park's promotion of large-scale social events and what can be described as a discotheque mentality. Large-scale parties should definitely be re-directed to other, more appropriate locations in the City. The City's proposal (currently under consideration) to ban alcohol and amplified music at pavilion and picnic sites deserves



support and implementation. Such a ban would be one of the most important initiatives that the City could undertake to begin eliminating the Ft. Disco view of Ft. Ward and returning it to its status as an arboretum and a park.

(3) (3) In the event that Ft. Ward's maintenance facility is relocated elsewhere, the City should replace it with a further tree-based buffer between the park and nearby residents. Given that the maintenance facility is only 50 feet from my back door, the City's decisions regarding its future will have a maximal effect on the quality of my family's life and the value of my property. One park official noted that the cleared area and existing access road would lend themselves easily to converting the maintenance facility into a pavilion for picnicking and partying. From my own standpoint, this would be a disastrous use of the area. In view of the City's previous track record of insensitivity toward adjacent residents (see below), I am greatly concerned that something even less desirable than the maintenance facility may take its place.

(4) (4) I would like to see a real effort by the City to explore water flow problems along the eastern boundary of the park. According to residents who have lived here longer than I have, a change in the water flow occurred a few years ago and has caused the backyards of residents along the eastern boundary to become streams or virtual rivers, especially during heavy storms. To deal with the problem, my immediate, "downstream" neighbor created a beaver dam, consisting of a ton of rocks and large timbers placed against my fence. The consequence has been flooding in my yard and other yards "upstream." One whole corner of my backyard has turned into virtual quicksand. Also, the marsh-like soil has become so loose that, during heavy wind and rain, all seven of my trees along the property line with Ft. Ward were blown over at a 45 degree angle. It took a great deal of effort to get them upright, and I've had to take additional steps to support them. I am now planning to spend a few thousand dollars to create proper drainage to protect my property. I would be very pleased to talk with anyone from the City regarding the hydrological problems and what might have occurred on the Ft. Ward side that has changed the water flow, creating a major mess and safety hazard for adjacent residents.

Background on City-related Problems:

For more than 20 years, I wanted to move closer to Ft. Ward. Unfortunately, I was given my wish and moved to a house adjacent to the park 5 years ago. Be careful what you wish for, as the proverb says, because it may come true. Since moving here, I've encountered unexpected problems connected with the maintenance facility and the total neglect of the property line on the Ft. Ward side.

The problems with the maintenance facility included stacks of old tires that furnished an ideal breeding ground for tiger mosquitoes, open dumpsters that literally stunk my family out of our own backyard on summer days, City workers standing on the dumpsters and able to look directly into our backyard, a rat explosion, overflowing garbage, and a general landfill-style use of the land 50 feet from my backdoor. After several years of protests, these problems have been addressed, but I remain extremely concerned about the City's plans for the future use of this land if the maintenance facility is eliminated.



The problems with the property line also reflected the City's indifference toward residents adjacent to the park. At a cost of \$3,000, I had to replace my previous fence, which was bent out of shape and basically crushed by several large trunks of low-quality trees leaning directly on the fence from the Ft. Ward side. The property line itself was overgrown with a green waterfall of Virginia creeper that cascaded over and through the fence. Owing to neglect by Ft. Ward, there were also poison ivy, brambles ten or twelve feet tall, and other weeds that made the property line, in the words of the fence replacement person, "the worst maintained property line I have seen in my 20 years of installing fences." I had to pay him several hundred extra dollars (over and beyond the \$3,000 for the fence) to bush-hog the property line so that a new fence could be installed. The property line, as noted earlier, is also messed up by water flow problems, which will entail the expenditure of several thousand additional dollars to correct. All told, I estimate that I will have had to spend about \$6,500 to correct problems created by the City and Ft. Ward.

Concluding Observations:

First and foremost, the City needs to balance its concern for park users with respect for the quality of life of permanent residents adjacent to the park. The way to begin is by respecting the park itself as a park and arboretum. The Ft. Disco mentality has got to be stopped. The current patterns of park usage are destroying the park and creating a discotheque atmosphere that spills over into nearby neighborhoods. Get rid of the alcohol and amplified music!

Second, given the City's terrible track record during my first several years as a resident adjacent to the park, I am greatly concerned about insensitivity in the future. I am especially concerned about the City's plans for the maintenance facility area, if the facility is moved elsewhere. The City should give serious consideration to creating a buffer between park activities and adjacent residents. I strongly recommend against developing the area as a pavilion for parties or for other park activities 50 feet from my backyard. I hope that the area will be planted to reflect the Park's primary identity as an arboretum.

I appreciate this chance to address the City directly and look forward to working with the City in its future deliberations.

Dear Ms. Durham,

This letter is in reply to the City's Feb. 9, 2009 request for input on the current facilities and operations at Fort Ward Park. Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the two City-sponsored community meetings and provide written comments. This dialogue is an important way to engage residents in the long-standing traditions of park protection, historic preservation, heritage tourism, education and recreational enjoyment in Alexandria.



Summary Recommendations

I recommend that the City of Alexandria take the following actions for Fort Ward Park.

1. Reaffirm the City's 1982 commitment, to the Commonwealth of Virginia and the National Park Service as part of the National Register of Historic Places designation, to operate Fort Ward Park as a Historical Park with recreation activities and plantings that are consistent with the historic nature of this park, and indicative of the City's total commitment to the preservation of the site. We urge you to keep the focus on history at Fort Ward Park. Perhaps the following purposes for Fort Ward Park could be incorporated into the draft action plan.

a. To preserve and interpret historical resources related to Fort Ward Park's role in the Civil War and the defense of Washington, D.C. and the pre-and post-Civil War periods in Alexandria, Virginia.

b. To conserve this portion of the linkage of open space that contributes to the character and scenic values of Alexandria.

c. To provide recreation uses and activities consistent with the historic nature of the park and its trees and planting beds.

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2. Limit all future special events to those uses consistent within the historic nature of this park. Uses, however, that draw large crowds and have no particular tie to the historic nature of the park can and should be placed in other Alexandria parks which do not have such a historic designation. Such parks as Ben Brenman, Chinguapin and Oronoco Bay, and Northern Virginia Park Authority areas may be more appropriate for large crowds.

3. The proposed new picnic pavilions, restrooms, paved trails, and parking facilities for Fort Ward Park, described in the City's October 16, 2008 Facility Study & Recommendations, should not be approved by the City until park historic and archeological sites are surveyed and a master plan is developed for the park's protection and use. A master plan, as well as Special Use Permits, will ensure that new uses will be consistent with the historic nature of the park, located appropriately and will not destroy historic areas.

4. Use the funds that are proposed for new facilities, paved trails, and parking areas for park-wide historic and archeological surveys, staff for the improved management of park users during peak periods, and park master planning. These tasks should be the City's top priority for this historical park.

5. Prohibit alcohol and amplified music within Fort Ward Park to discourage activities that are inconsistent with a historical park, family picnicking, and children's play areas. Allow amplified music for City-sponsored concerts at the amphitheater provided they are consistent with, and enforced through, the City's Noise Ordinance.



6. Re-locate those portions of the City's Nursery and Maintenance Yard activities that are currently located on top of, or adjacent to, African-American grave sites.

7. Begin working now with the City Office of Archeology to better understand the pre- and post-Civil War periods with the goal of broader interpretation for the expected sesquicentennial crowds at Fort Ward Park in 2011. This is a story yet to be told.

8. Empower the Friends of Fort Ward Park, or another qualified private non-profit organization, to help secure

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public and private money and in-kind services, through donations, grants, and revenue generation techniques, to supplement funds provided annually by the City for Fort Ward Park Museum and the entire park.

9. Modify the Fort Ward park boundary to add the 54,088 square foot parcel at the end of Fort Ward Place and along Van Dorn Street. City staff indicates that this parcel is actually is part of the park, although the Fort Ward Park map presented at the public meetings, does not include it. Evidently, according to staff, the property was dedicated to the City from the Marlboro Development Joint Venture in 1978. It is zoned R-8, while the rest of the park is zoned POS. If additional staff assistance is needed the property could be added to the City's list of open space priorities that the Northern VA Conservation Trust is assisting Alexandria with .

10. Establish a single and easily accessible point of contact for regular communication, collaboration and information between the Fort Ward Park managers and the public they serve.

Background

These comments are intended to provide City staff, as well as local elected officials, with ideas and suggestions which will help define and guide improvements at Fort Ward Park. The comments reflect my interests and concerns, as well as the conversations I have had over the last eighteen months with a broad range of interests including the: residents of neighborhood communities including Marlboro Estates; former residents of the Fort Ward property before the City took ownership of the park; members of the Oakland Baptist Church; managers and staff of the City's Parks, Recreation & Cultural Affairs, Police Department, Office of Archeology, Parks & Recreation Commission; the leaders of the West End Business Association, Friends of Fort Ward Park Board, Seminary Hill Association Board, National Trust for Historic Preservation, Fort Ward Museum & Historic Site, Coalition for Smarter Growth, the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers, National Alliance of Faith & Justice, and National Park Service.



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Many residents, government and group leaders are deeply concerned about the City's ongoing management of the park, its historic sites and park users. City actions within the park have been taken without Special Use Permits or opportunity for public review and comment. These actions have intensified the use of the park for a solid waste transfer station; large unmanaged special events with alcohol and excessively loud amplified music; and a park district maintenance operation. The current nursery and maintenance area has been developed on top of the graves of former residents of the park area.

The City's actions particularly over the last several years have destroyed and neglected historic African-American historic and cultural heritage, neglected arboretum tree and shrub plantings, hindered the use of the park by visitors, and had an adverse impact on the quality of life of adjacent homeowners.

Residents of the surrounding neighborhoods and group leaders are concerned about the City's October 16, 2008 proposal for the major expansion of picnic pavilions, more paved parking areas, new restrooms, and paved trails. The Facility Study & Recommendations for Fort Ward Park was developed and posted on the City's website without public input or review. In fact, the more than 100 participants at the two public meetings the City held were not supportive of the Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities Plan.

The document does not respond to concerns made by the public over the last two years nor does it include a plan for the entire park. Specific recreational facilities are proposed to be located in areas of the park where freed African-American slaves lived, and many are buried, following the end of the Civil War and the military occupation of the area.

The City's proposal unilaterally ignores the documented historic and cultural heritage of the park that eventually justified it being designated to the National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places.

I understand, based on discussions with Commonwealth Historic Preservation Office, the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers, that the City's past and

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proposed actions at Fort Ward Park will jeopardize the 1982 designation of Fort Ward Park on the National Register of Historic Places. Surely losing this designation will hurt tourism efforts and reflect poorly on the City's reputation as one of the premier areas for historic preservation in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

At the second public meeting on March 4, 2009 Roger Blakeley of the Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities Department told attendees that due to proposed City budget cuts "Some of the [user management] things we tried to do last year we might not be able to do today". He also told the audience that archeological surveys and master planning are very expensive and we don't have money for these tasks now. With budget cuts



looming, and cutbacks in staff and user management services predicted, the idea that the City would develop more facilities and encourage more recreation users is misguided and will make existing problems worse. If anything, the City should use existing funds to do the needed archeological surveys and master planning, and better manage existing use. This type of basic information and service is an essential foundation for good decision-making in the future.

The City and Commonwealth are now planning for the sesquicentennial celebration of the Civil War in 2011. This is a celebration of our history and Fort Ward Park. We look forward to the City's draft action plan on March 18, 2009.

Dear Ms Durham,

I am writing both personally as well as professionally about the proposed plans to expand recreational activities at Ft. Ward Park. I am a nearby landowner and have worked for 31 years in the House of representatives, 17 years of this time on the Interior, Environment & related Agencies Appropriation Subcommittee, as Minority and Majority Staff Director. I am currently working in this capacity.

Before I explain the relevancy of my professional life to this issue, I want to mention that I was born and raised in Arlington, Virginia but adopted Alexandria as home when I began working after college because the city had recently begun the restoration and adaptive reuse of the historic buildings in Old Town. Even then, I was moved that instead of new tall buildings that were showing up in Arlington and Rosslyn, Alexandria had the foresight to embrace the rich history of the city.

Let me explain why many of my fellow residents from the area and I are adamantly opposed to this misguided plan to dramatically change the use of the historical park to lure large crowds for non-historic special events and business gatherings that the city can neither manage or service.

Over the years Ft. Ward has attracted Civil War enthusiasts, small family and community picnics, walkers of all ages, and young parents with children. The Lynn House, directly across the street, is home to many senior residents who come almost daily to the park with their canes, walkers and wheel chairs. They are an inspiration to all and this park is popular and appropriate for all of these important activities.

Now for my second and most important reason for opposing the proposed plan--
HISTORY!

The historic City of Alexandria has been the key attraction for residents and tourists from across the country and world. History is precisely how the City and Chamber of Commerce and Tourism Office has, and continues to, promote the area. History is why people are drawn to Alexandria. Our history is who we were, are and will be.



The longtime users of this park have known for years that there are 100 year old marked and unmarked graves that have been ignored, damaged and destroyed by grounds maintenance crews and park managers over the years. These graves are a part of the other story of African Americans who worked the land, owned the land are buried on the land and were summarily displaced from the land. The heritage of these freed slaves and their descendants, who are part of the pre-and post-Civil War periods of Ft. Ward, need to be recognized, protected and interpreted by the City.

Thirty year residents of the area have known that the City desecrated graves when the City expanded and paved over the maintenance yard without a Special Use Permit, archeological survey, or use of the existing historical information within the City offices. Without reaching out to areas residents, many of which are related to people who lived in that part of the park, the City turned its head away from history and the heritage of African Americans.

During the two public meetings the City sponsored recently over 100 individuals attended from the Seminary Hill Association, Inc., Friends of Ft. Ward Park, the Oakland Baptist Church, neighborhood communities that surround most of the park, and most importantly, Alexandria families whose ancestors lived on the site. There was no voice in support of the City's proposed Facility Study & Recommendations.

This response was the complete opposite of the City's recommendations and comments made repeatedly by the Chair of the City's parks and Recreation Commission. The leaders of these groups believe that this park needs to greatly expand recreation activities and build new pavilions, paved parking, restrooms and paved trails. They acknowledge however, that the City has no money for a master plan for the park, nor can it afford to do archeological surveys and any thought of these actions will have to be long term.

According to Roger Blakeley of the Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities Department, who spoke at the second public meeting, due to huge budget cuts there will be a reduction of visitor services at the park.

These types of comments and rationale are contradictory. On one hand City officials and Commission members stress how limited funds are for parks and recreation yet, at the same time, they are advocating for new picnic pavilions, expanded paved parking lots, new restrooms, and paved trails. These types of comments make taxpayers cynical and the public process for developing an action plan for Ft. Ward park meaningless.

It is important for everyone to remember that this city petitioned to have Ft. Ward Park in its entirety designated in 1982, as a historical park, to the National Register of Historic Places by the Commonwealth of Virginia and the National Park Service. Since that time the city has literally paved over and ignored the marked and unmarked historic graves of those who lived on the site following the military occupation--despite that these areas were identified in City park and archeology documents. Gravestones have been destroyed by routine maintenance and the unauthorized expansion of the maintenance



yard. More importantly, the City has resisted recognizing and interpreting the history of African Americans at Ft. Ward for more than 40 years.

Now the City has grand plans for facilities to attract more huge special events with large crowds that are encouraged by lax user management, parking restrictions, special use permits, alcohol regulations and noise controls. These actions will continue to compromise the integrity of Ft. Ward Park and will jeopardize its listing on the National Register of Historic Places. It is unfortunate that you have not used the expertise of your Archeological Office, the Ft. Ward Park Museum, and area residents to survey the entire park area and build a better foundation for appropriate decision-making, protection, interpretation and the enjoyment of Alexandria's history.

I know very well that it will jeopardize the National Register listing because for the last 17 year I have served as

Majority and Minority Staff Director (clerk) of the subcommittee that provides annual funds for the State Historic Preservation Offices nationwide and the National Trust of Historic Preservation. I have dealt personally with Dick Moe of the National Trust and Nancy Schamu of the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Offices over many years. They have been consulted on this issue as has the Virginia State Historic Preservation Office. Dramatically changing the historic property which is on the Register in its entirety, by more paving for additional parking, large pavilions and large crowds for non-historic purposes, will not only threaten the National Register status, but will more importantly degrade and devalue the very core and attraction of Alexandria, its HISTORY. It only takes one person to petition to have the park removed. Please do not take this proposed action, while there is obviously a strong force promoting this in the city, it is not what the residents and long respected groups want – be proud of our heritage.

hi laura,

i just wanted to express my wishes about the use of the "fort ward" turf field. this past year i have played on the over-35 co-ed moms & dads league, and it has been such a fabulous experience. the joy of being on a team, the joy of getting in shape, the joy of learning a new sport (i had never played soccer before)--it did so much for my physical and mental health & well-being! i have 3 boys, ages 7, 9, and 11, and i am filled up with their sports practices and sports games both during the week and on weekends; it was such a thrill to participate in a sport for ME!

and one of the major factors that made the games so enjoyable was the use of a turf field, whether it was minnie howard (the spring season) or the fort ward field (the fall season). when we had to play on the awful eisenhower "grass" (dirt) field a couple of times, i truly feared falling down and getting clobbered by the impact. i also left those two games feeling like i didn't really enjoy playing b/c the terrain subtracted so much from the joy of playing the sport.

i LOVED the fort ward field and i hope that whoever is in charge of determining who can play there will let us continue having our weekend evening games there. we are such a huge group of alexandria parents (and growing with every season), and it means so much to us to enjoy our

City of Alexandria - Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities
Fort Ward Park Community Meetings



weekly hour and 1/2 together, using a field that we helped build/support in our alexandria community.

Dear Fellow Alexandrians and staff of the Recreation and Park Department:

I, a fourth generation descendant of African Americans (both maternally and paternally), who lived and worked in the Fort Ward and Virginia Theological Seminary communities and who founded the Oakland Baptist Church more than a century ago, wish to thank the City of Alexandria Recreation Department for the opportunity to comment on the proper future uses and projects we hope will maintain and preserve the historic significance of Fort Ward. Several of my family members have attended the recent public meetings and contributed to the community process of determining what's best for the 32-acre historic site as the city moves forward into this century.

I understand the current environmental concerns, particularly of the Friends of Fort Ward and the neighboring communities, such as the Seminary Civic Association on Woods Avenue and Woods Place, where many of the descendant families still reside.

It is my foremost desire that the long overlooked and neglected history of the African Americans, who worked the land, owned the land, buried on the land, and summarily displaced from the land (e.g., my paternal grandparents), be restored, preserved and commemorated in a formal fashion, especially as we come upon the Sesquicentennial of the Civil War.

My greatest fear is that the historic areas of the park, which contain marked and unmarked graves, including my maternal great-grandparents and other family members, will be further desecrated and the valuable contributions of African-American slaves, contraband and freedmen will be lost forever if overburdening recreational uses at Fort Ward Park are expanded before mandatory archeological and historical studies are conducted and completed.

As discussed during the recreation department planning meetings this year, I encourage:

- • **Removal of trash, debris, equipment, etc., from around the gravesites of Clara Adams and her husband, that are currently located in the city's park and recreation maintenance yard and nursery on the east side of Fort Ward Park.**
- • **Eventual relocation of the maintenance yard and nursery which I am certain is the location of other unmarked graves, a former school, church and homes of African Americans dating back before, during and after the Civil War.**
- • **Fencing or some other protective barrier around the marked graves outside of the Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery and near the maintenance lot.**



- • **Establishing a walking tour of the historic Fort Ward African-American community after further historic and archeological study.**
- • **Inclusion of historic markers throughout the park that note significant points about the Fort Ward African-American community.**
- • **Inclusion of an exhibit detailing the Fort Ward/Seminary African-American community in the Fort Ward Museum.**

I offer my support and assistance in making improvement to Fort Ward Park which I believe will benefit all Alexandrians and future generations in knowing the rich and complete history of our great city.

Dear Ms. Durham,

The Alexandria Archaeological Commission recommends that any renovation and improvement plans for Fort Ward Park include protecting, preserving, and interpreting the post-Civil War era African-American settlement and cemeteries throughout the park. Information and priorities associated with cultural resources and the memories of former residents should be developed and integrated into any Fort Ward plans. We further recommend that any plans be deferred until historical and archaeological research is completed and stewardship and interpretive plans are adopted that recognize the importance of the post-Civil War African Americans associated with this place.

“The Fort,” as this African-American community was known is one of the most significant places in Alexandria history and much of its cultural resources are still unexplored. On this site is buried Clara Adams, one of the founders of the Oakland Baptist Church who also provided the land for the creation of a one-room school for black children, which existed between approximately 1893 and 1926. Her gravestone is still visible in the City nursery. “The Fort” was home for Alexandria African-Americans, many of whom worked for the Virginia Theological Seminary. Those families were relocated when Fort Ward became an historical park, but some still remain in Alexandria. Their history is a part of Alexandria’s past that should be remembered and celebrated through interpretation of the area and stewardship of the cemetery where their families are buried.

At present, the known grave locations are not maintained in proper settings, and many more graves may be in the City maintenance yard, south of the Oakland Baptist Cemetery, and in other places throughout the park. These possible graves, as well as the other cultural resources associated with “The Fort’s” school/church, homes, gardens and landscapes should be identified through archaeological survey and studied through archival and oral history. We are concerned that the plant nursery, surrounding maintenance yard for trucks and equipment, concrete speed bumps, dumpsters, snow



fences, and a pre-fabricated metal booth are not respectful and diminish the historical importance and character of the area.

As a community, we should ensure that all the graves will not be neglected, forgotten, and mistreated as did the Freedmen's Cemetery. As a community, we should support the preservation, protection, and interpretation not only of the Civil War fort but also of the post-Civil War African-American settlement. These resources—properly identified and protected—present an opportunity to learn and reflect on the effect of the Civil War on Alexandria and its African-American citizens. For these reasons, the Alexandria Archaeological Commission believes that the Fort Ward renovation and improvement plan must include a stewardship plan for the graves and “The Fort” settlement.

Dear Ms. Durham

I appreciate efforts made by the Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities Department to solicit comments on management and operation of the Fort Ward Park.

Gradually over the last several years, the City has made changes at Fort Ward that are inconsistent with the historic park and transformed part of it into a regional maintenance yard and transfer point for trash. These changes have been unsightly, increased maintenance traffic and encroached into sensitive African American historic sites. The changes have been made with complete disregard of the residents and families who live nearby and frequently use the park.

Because of actions previously taken by the Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities Department, there was considerable feeling of distrust and suspicion as to whether the meetings would actually improve management of the park.

The Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities Department has expanded the maintenance yard without a Special Use Permit, removed trees that once screened the yard from Picnic Area 1, increased the amount of composting in the Yard, covered African-American grave sites, and placed a large screened dumpster in a prominent location on the circular lane. They have also placed a metal fabricated ticket/security booth at the entrance and installed car parking stops as speed bumps that impede walkers and discourage use by disabled patrons. In the past they have proposed plans to increase parking areas and expand picnic areas to increase use and potential revenues. There is also dog exercise area on or near one of the historic features at the park.

There is also an issue of not adequately managing a permit process for large crowds using the park. There have been numerous weekends when the park is overcrowded, noisy, and the use of alcohol and amplified music are major problems. Overcrowding has impacted the historic areas, grass, trees, plants, terrain, and drainage leading to deterioration of the park and what was



considered Alexandria's arboretum. Unchecked use increases City costs, at the expense of the historic character and the African-American resources.

The Fort Ward Park Maintenance and Operations, Fiscal Year 2008 Cost Center Report reported the entire Fort Ward District Operations generates approximately \$50,000 in picnic area rentals. Attempts to increase revenues by enlarging picnic and parking areas would lead to further deterioration of the park and would not be cost effective. Operation and maintenance costs would increase substantially offsetting any increased revenue. Better management and controls can reduce costs and protect the resource.

Alexandria can have a park that allows multiple compatible uses to co-exist in an historical park. However, the size, terrain, and historic character of the park limit the size of groups using the picnic facilities. Failure to manage large crowds damages the park and its historic resources, disrupts adjacent owners and users, and increases short-and long-term costs.

To improve management, restore the attractiveness of the park, and update and make diverse the historic interpretation at Fort Ward, I suggest the following actions be taken.

Short Term

- Do not increase or intensify use of the historic park. Maintain and encourage passive use of the park for tourist, history buffs, walkers, small groups of picnickers, and those who want to enjoy the natural outdoors.
- Groups exceeding 25 people should use larger picnic facilities at Ben Brenman, Chinquapin, Oronoco Bay or areas administered by the Northern Virginia Park Authority.
- Create an advisory committee with authority to help identify improvements, park management including maintenance and operation.
- Remove the maintenance yard within 2-3 years and restore the land..
- Consider providing incentives and increasing the use of civic organizations, students and volunteers in beautifying and maintaining the park.
- Involve City staff and volunteers in developing a unique interpretive history of the contribution of African Americans during the Civil War; building and maintaining the Fort, working at the nearby Fairfax Seminary Hospital, and living at the Fort after the War.
- Improve the permitting process and the management of visitors during peak periods to ensure users know the park rules and pay an appropriate fee to cover administration, operation and maintenance costs associated with their use.
- Provide protection and appropriate recognition of known grave sites.
- Continue providing on-street parking for special events organized by the museum staff.



Long Term

- Replace current car parking stops used speed bumps with ones that are more compatible for walkers, especially for the elderly and persons in wheel chairs.
- Remove, the existing trash dumpster on the circular road and develop a less obtrusive container and fencing for collection of park generated trash. Offsite collection of trash for storage at the park should end.
- Repaint the car parking stops to a color more compatible with a historic park, a shade of brown.
- Remove the ticket/security booth and if it is necessary, install a booth that is compatible with a historic civil war park and in a location that is more effective.
- Develop and implement training to ensure that operations and maintenance staff understand their responsibilities in caring for a historic park.

Budget cuts and reduced staffs are a reality. However, instead of encouraging use of the park by large groups, the City should develop a management plan that protects the park, its historic and educational resources and provides a safe and quiet retreat from the busy pace of urban life.

Alexandria is fortunate to have a Fort Ward. It is an important community asset and helps define Alexandria as an attractive, diverse community. I hope the City, management and staff will take steps to protect the park, its historic character and improve park management and stewardship.

Photos will be sent in a separate file.

Dear City Mayor, City Council Members, City Manager, City Staffers of the Alexandria Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities, and Fellow Alexandrians:

When you walk in the gated Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery on the grounds of Ft. Ward Park today there is a headstone to the left that marks the Randall family plot; to the right is a headstone that marks the Terrell family plot. These names represent who I am, a fifth-generation Alexandrian, a family historian and a noted journalist, who is attempting to restore and record this rich overlooked history of African-Americans who contributed, in no small part, their hard labor and land to develop Alexandria into the vibrant city it is today. My maternal and paternal heritage is linked to the countless, nameless African Americans who lived on or near Ft. Ward and the Virginia Theological Seminary and Episcopal High School campuses before and after the Civil War into the mid-1960s until their descendants were relocated to Woods Avenue, Woods Place and elsewhere.

Nothing would honor these valiant citizens more than permanent markers to commemorate their community contributions and endeavors which includes building



schools, churches and businesses that sustained not only their own families, but also these historic institutions for which Alexandria is known. However, today a number of their graves are unmarked throughout the Ft. Ward Park, primarily buried under the city recreation and parks department's maintenance yard and nursery. This dishonorable situation must be remedied as soon as possible.

That is why I, as a descendant of African Americans, who lived and worked in the Ft. Ward and Virginia Theological Seminary communities and who founded the Oakland Baptist Church more than a century ago, wish to thank the City of Alexandria Recreation, Park, and Cultural Activities Department for the opportunity to comment on the proper future uses and projects we hope will maintain and preserve the historic significance of Ft. Ward. Several of my family members and others have attended the recent public meetings held and contributed to the community process of determining what's best for the 32-acre historic site as the city moves forward into this century to "balance" its uses.

I understand and concur with the current environmental concerns, including overcrowding, loud noise and alcohol abuse, expressed by the Friends of Ft. Ward and the neighboring communities, such as the Seminary Hill Civic Association and the Seminary Civic Association on Woods Avenue and Woods Place, where many of the descendant families still reside.

It is my premiere desire and request that the long overlooked and neglected history of the African Americans, who worked the land, owned the land, buried on the land, and summarily displaced from the land, be restored, preserved and commemorated in a formal fashion, especially as we come upon the Sesquicentennial of the Civil War. I have been voluntarily gathering oral histories from former residents, as well as old photographs and official documents (some already gathered by the city's archeological department) to compile a more comprehensive written narrative.

My greatest fear is that the historic areas of the park, which contain marked and unmarked graves, including that of my great-great aunt, Clara Adams, and her husband, as well as my maternal grandparents, William and Bernie [McKnight] Terrell and my paternal relatives of the Randall family, will be further desecrated, and the valuable contributions of African-American slaves, contraband and freedman will be lost forever if overburdening recreational uses at Ft. Ward Park are expanded before mandatory archeological and historical studies are conducted and completed.

As discussed during the recreation department planning meetings this year, I encourage:

- Immediate removal of trash, debris, equipment, etc., from around the gravesites of Clara Adams and her husband, that are currently located in the city's park and recreation maintenance yard and nursery on the east side of Ft. Ward Park.
- Eventual relocation of the maintenance yard and nursery which we are certain is the location of other unmarked graves, a former school, church and homes of African Americans dating back before, during and after the Civil War.
- Immediate fencing or some other protective barrier around the marked graves outside of the Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery and near the maintenance lot.



- Establishing a walking tour of the historic Ft. Ward African-American community after further historic and archeological study.
- Inclusion of historic markers throughout the park that note significant points about the Ft. Ward African-American community.
- Inclusion of an exhibit about the Ft. Ward/Seminary African-American community in the Ft. Ward Museum.

We offer our support and assistance in making improvement to Ft. Ward Park that “balance” it uses and that we believe will benefit all Alexandrians and future generations in knowing the full history of our great city.

Dear Fellow Alexandrians and Staff of the Recreation and Park Department:

We, the descendants of African Americans, who lived and worked in the Ft. Ward and Virginia Theological Seminary communities and who founded the Oakland Baptist Church more than a century ago, wish to thank the City of Alexandria Recreation Department for the opportunity to comment on the proper future uses and projects we hope will maintain and preserve the historic significance of Ft. Ward. Several of us have attended the recent public meetings and contributed to the community process of determining what’s best for the 32-acre historic site as the city moves forward into this century.

We understand the current environmental concerns, particularly of the Friends of Ft. Ward and the neighboring communities, like the Seminary Civic Association on Woods Avenue and Woods Place, where many of the descendant families still reside.

It is our premiere desire that the long overlooked and neglected history of the African Americans, who worked the land, owned the land, buried on the land, and summarily displaced from the land, be restored, preserved and commemorated in a formal fashion, especially as we come upon the Sesquicentennial of the Civil War.

Our greatest fear is that the historic areas of the park, which contain marked and unmarked graves, will be further desecrated and the valuable contributions of African-American slaves, contraband and freedman will be lost forever if overburdening recreational uses at Ft. Ward Park are expanded before mandatory archeological and historical studies are conducted and completed.

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- Inclusion of historic markers throughout the park that note significant points about the Ft. Ward African-American community.
- Inclusion of an exhibit about the Ft. Ward/Seminary African-American community in the Ft. Ward Museum.

We offer our support and assistance in making improvement to Ft. Ward Park that we believe will benefit all Alexandrians and future generations in knowing the full history of our great city.

I am part of a group that walks the loop of Ft Ward every day at 7:30am. The originators of this group started this practice over 20 years ago, and I, myself, have been doing it for 12-15 years.

We love the Park and particularly the changes in the last year that Larry (correct name?) has brought: "Open to Foot Traffic Only" for the early morning hours has virtually stopped St. Stephens parents from impatiently racing past us trying to "get ahead of the drop-off line" by cutting through the Park to make the drop. We have also greatly appreciated the immediate treatment of icy sections of the road when necessary. Maintenance of lawns and plantings is excellent and makes for a wonderful way to start the day.

Thank you, Alexandria City, for making parks a priority. We're delighted that things improve in our parks despite the economy.

Glenn:

Thank you for sharing Debbie's comments concerning the City's plans at Ft. Ward Park. I for one, echo her sentiments and particularly appreciate her documentation of the historical aspects which have long been ignored.



Alexandria, rich in her history, is what attracted Sophia and I to move to Marlboro Estates in 1991, (re)establish roots and raise our children in this great City. Sophia, being a native Alexandrian and former President of the Alexandria Dental Society, has strong ties both personally and professionally to the many people and places that make this City so unique.

As you know, I've had the opportunity to work with the National Park Service over the past 26 years. The challenge of balancing "preservation and protection of our natural and cultural resources while providing facilities for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations" is *formidable*. Due process has necessitated project presentations for park development before the National Capital Planning Commission, the Washington Commission of Fine Arts, the Corps of Engineers, House and Senate subcommittees, as well as state and local agencies and Friends' groups. Transparency and accountability throughout this process have been cornerstones of successful project implementation. It was disheartening to learn that these things were not happening all along for Ft. Ward Park. I am not writing in an official capacity but as a taxpayer, a concerned citizen with something to offer in support of a proactive process to preserve and protect the Fort.

The Park Service has a long history of cooperation with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world. Therefore, I consider Ft. Ward Park "an opportunity in our own backyard" to demonstrate that type of cooperation through due process, and due diligence...something that has been exposed as lacking until recently. Fort Ward Park, and her sister Fort Circle Parks throughout the District, Virginia and Maryland, deserve *nothing less*.

We are fortunate that the overwhelming majority of the City's and Marlboro Estates residents have embraced the protection and preservation of the Park, expressed in phone calls, memoranda and throughout deliberations at public meetings. It should be clear to all by now that this is more than just about public permits, decibel levels of amplified music, property values, ignored gravesites, tramped archeological sites, trash, drugs, and law enforcement. While all of these issues and others remain extremely important to nearby residents, a Master Plan for short- and long-term use of the park is what is desperately needed. Perhaps it begins with a detailed survey of the Park, it's boundaries, topography, salient features and archeological order. It's not about what the City cannot afford to do, but rather, what we cannot afford to let happen; i.e., unplanned development, uncontrolled "improvements" and irreversible damage to the site and her resources.

I'd like to also take this opportunity to thank you for keeping us informed, and empowered! We've placed our trust in our elected officials and park managers to do the right thing, which we trust they will. To that end, it's time to thank these public stewards, in advance, for working closely with us as stakeholders to effect a long-term solution for Ft. Ward Park. Ideally, this entails a solution that protects *and* celebrates the legacy of the Fort's place during the Civil War, of a culturally diverse community, and of providing an experience that will remain unimpaired for future generations.

RESOLUTION REGARDING FUTURE USES OF FORT WARD PARK



Fort Ward, located in the City of Alexandria, was constructed in 1861 by Union forces in the defense of Washington, D.C. at the outset of the American Civil War. The earthen fort, one of 68 constructed, served in defense of the Federal City until its abandonment in December 1865. The area, prior to 1861 was primarily rural, and due to its relatively higher elevation above the city, served as summer homes for such prominent Alexandria citizens as Cassius Lee, cousin of Robert E. Lee. After 1865 the grounds abutting the abandoned Fort provided homes for freed blacks. Known as "the Hill," Fort Ward is the site of the Oakland Baptist Church cemetery, as well as other African American graves. It was the site of one of the earliest public schools for Black children, as well as a church. Therefore,

Whereas the City of Alexandria demonstrated foresight in initiating the acquisition of the land to assemble Fort Ward Park (the "Park") in 1953, to protect it from potential development, and

Whereas the City of Alexandria restored the Northwest Bastion of the Fort to its 1864 appearance and continues to preserve the earthen walls of the Fort, and

Whereas the Park admirably served as Alexandria's premier Civil War site during the Centennial anniversary of that War during the 1961 to 1965 period, and

Whereas with the sesquicentennial of the American Civil War fast approaching in 2011, wherein millions of Americans are expected to visit sites such as the Park to better understand their own past, and

Whereas according to the City of Alexandria's own website, "Fort Ward has been cited as the best Civil War restoration/preservation project in the mid-Atlantic region, as well as the flagship of the Defenses of Washington," and

Whereas due to its historical significance the City of Alexandria nominated the entire area of the Park to the National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places in 1982 as a Historical Park, and the Park was so designated, THEREFORE,

Be it herein resolved that the Friends of Fort Ward encourages and requests the City of Alexandria and the Department of Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities to: 1) reconfirm the City's commitment to the historic preservation of this asset; 2) limit uses that compromise the integrity of the site and deter from its historic character, and carefully manage other uses; 3) remove the horticultural maintenance area from the Park to a more appropriate location in the City; 4) protect marked and unmarked graves, and 5) begin working now with the City Archeologist, the Office of Historic Alexandria, and community members from the Oakland Baptist Church and the Friends of Fort Ward to better understand the broader historic nature of the Park.

Dated March 12, 2009

Respectfully submitted to the City of Alexandria,

The Friends of Fort Ward, Alexandria, Virginia

Dear Ms. Durham,

I draw your attention to two problem areas concerning the soccer field lighting.

1. The lights are on many nights when there are no games. For example, during our last storm the lights were on for 3 nights. The field was snow covered and there were no players, but the lights were on from dark until 9:00 p.m. and some nights until 9:30 p.m.



2. There is significant glare from the far left tower lights on the field. This glare shines onto West Braddock Rd. and is easily seen from my dining room, kitchen, and bedroom windows.

These problems are intrusive to the neighborhood and to the immediate neighbors of Ft. Ward Park. I appreciate your attention to these two lighting problems or the Park.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I was at the park this past summer when a large party was underway. Unfortunately, there were only two officers at the front gate. This level of staffing is insufficient to protect the park and museum. Children and parents were climbing the Fort walls, pushing at the gate, moving the cannon, and exhibiting a lack of respect for the historic features of the park. If large events are permitted - planned or unexpected - I would request that the City provide some greater form of protection for these wonderful and in large part original features. Fort Ward is a unique historic gem, and unnecessary damage should be prevented wherever possible.

Laura – on behalf of the Alexandria Soccer Association (ASA) and its 1800 children and their families I am submitting these comments regarding the ongoing Ft. Ward redevelopment/planning process. ASA takes no position regarding activities in the historic part of Ft. Ward. Our remarks are confined to use of the playing field located behind St. Stephens and St. Agnes Middle School (SSSA) and associated support facilities.

ASA strongly supports the current use of Ft. Ward. The installation of an artificial surface and lights has greatly increased the capacity of the field and helped to alleviate the playing field debt which currently exists in the City. While the City still lacks sufficient large-sized fields suitable for use by pre-teen and teenage children, the ability to use the facility at Ft. Ward in most bad weather situations as well as at night helps accommodate these individuals that otherwise might not have sufficient access to practice or game facilities.

ASA would like to see improved restroom facilities at or near the Ft. Ward field. Current restrooms used by playing field users are somewhat far-off, a little difficult to find and a little intimidating to find and use at night. ASA recommends the installation of some form of facility closer to the field or improved access, including signage and lighting to the existing restrooms.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Dear Mr. Kincannon,

I am writing in support of the continued use of Ft.

Ward soccer field for Masters League soccer.

I am a 42-year old mother

of two soccer-playing girls, who also use the field, and I have played many

games there myself after joining the League last season. To be frank, the

evenness and cushioned quality of the pitch , and the lighting are 100%

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necessary to the success of the League. Without those things, the chance of injuries (and their seriousness) would be greatly increased. We are a friendly League, but we are also a bunch of older, so-so athletes running around getting in each other's way and hoping not to go home too battered. The games are fun and exhilarating when played at Ft. Ward; the couple we played at Henley Field were more on the miserable side--the hardpacked dirt that was the field accounts for that.

Please take this into

consideration when the use of Ft. Ward afterhours (when the Master's League is allowed to play) comes up for discussion.

Dear Mayor Euille,

First ,I want to compliment you on the wonderful way the city removed the snow during our last storm.It was terrific. Unfortunately one of the plows inadvertantly knocked down our mail box. We didn't see it happen ,but we're okay with it.A new replacement is being installed. Accidents happen. :

I also want to add my support to the Marlboro Drive activists who are working energetically to protect the Fort Ward Park from overuse and inappropriate use.Alexandria is one of the best run,well cared for ,charming and lovely cities in the country.We should make every effort to keep it that way.It is a never ending struggle for you,I'm sure. But Alexandria works because of our great government (You and our elected officials) and our involved and concerned neighbors.In these difficult economic times,your job is much harder, but this too shall pass and Alexandria will continue to be a great "little' town because of your vision.

Dear Ms. Durham,

This note is part of the public comment regarding proposed improvements at Fort Ward Park and its facilities. First, I would like to congratulate the Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities for the inclusive manner with which it has undertaken the public hearing process. There are many interests and points of view to be accommodated, and I believe that the department has done its best to enable all to express their views.

As a member of the Friends of Fort Ward, my particular concerns have to do with the preservation of the historic character of Fort Ward. I strongly support measures that limit uses that detract from that historic character. I further urge that the city undertake to rectify the situation where irreplaceable historic artifacts stored in the Fort Ward Museum basement are put at hazard by water infiltration; halt current plans to enlarge the parking and picnic areas; begin working now with the City Office of Archeology to better understand the pre- and post-Civil War periods as represented City of Alexandria - Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities
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in Fort Ward Park, with the goal of broader interpretation for the expected Civil War Sesquicentennial crowds; and removal of the horticultural maintenance area with the park to a more suitable location in the city.

Ms. Durham,

I have written you previously about this issue (see below), but understand that some citizens remain committed to the elimination of the lights, and/or nighttime play, at Ft. Ward park. For this reason, I would like to reiterate my strong opposition to proposed change. Thank you for again considering my views on this matter.

Laura,

If I might add to John's note below, we worked exceedingly hard to get a field like the one we have at Ft. Ward. It is truly the centerpiece of our soccer program, which accounts for 45% of all organized youth sports participation in the City. While perhaps something could be done to turn the lights out whenever the field is not being used, any reduction in available hours in the evenings before or during our fall or spring soccer seasons would not be viewed favorably by our membership.

Thanks for allowing us to comment.

Laura-

I am one of the founders of the Alexandria Masters League, a soccer league made up of Alexandrian citizen aged 35+. Last season we had 160 players and based on the leagues popularity, we anticipate expanding this season.

Fields are scarce in our city and we take whatever time is left after the youth and other leagues have been scheduled- this means we play weekend evenings. Nighttime use of Ft. Ward field is crucial for the survival of our league. I have encouraged players in our league to contact you as well expressing their views on the lights.

PLEASE COUNT ME IN AS ONE OF THE CITIZENS OF ALEXANDRIA WHO ENJOYS EVENING USE OF THE FT. WARD FIELD. I think of it as one of the great plusses of living in Alexandria.

Ms. Durham,

Please accept this message in support of continued use of Fort Ward Park soccer field for night games.

Not only do I make use of the field through the Masters League (over-35 co-ed), my son's Alexandria travel team regularly hold practices there on weeknights. There are

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simply not enough soccer fields in Alexandria to accommodate the weekend and weeknight demand for soccer playing and practice time on Fort Ward Park field during evening hours. In response to the growing demand for playable fields--1800 youth players and several hundred adult players--the City has invested much effort and financial resources to updating the city's soccer fields. Please do not roll back the progress.

I would assume any impact of the lights on any neighboring residents will diminish or disappear when foliage returns. Moreover, there certainly must be a mechanism that the City can employ to ensure lights are turned off when the field is not in use.

Good afternoon,

As a life long Alexandria resident, a boy who grew up playing ASA soccer and an adult who has participated in the CO-Ed rec league for something like 15 year, I want to compliment you on the wonderful turf fields at Minnie Howard and Ft Ward. As a member of the Master's Soccer league over the last two season I have absolutely loved the playing surface and the flexibility of playing time.

My weekends tend to by fairly busy doing the many things that three daughters demand. My Spring looks rather busy as I try to coach two ASA soccer teams and also coordinate the U8 girls league. Needless to say the weekend days tend to be vary busy. Playing evening games has been provided the ability to be an involved citizen and fit exercise into the evening hours. Please do what you can to make sure the Alexandria soccer facilities remain open to residents at flexible times. It would be a sin to lose Minnie Howard or Fort Ward at night.

Please let me know if I can help in anyway to make sure the fields are open for use.

Thanks for all that you do for Alexandria,

Dear Ms. Durham,

I write to you regarding Ft Ward Field and its use.

I coach Alexandria's under fourteen travel team, Alexandria Storm and I am a player / manager of the Ivy Hill Soccer team that plays in the Alexandria Masters League. I cannot overstate how pleased I am with this facility as are my fellow coaches, players and all the many family members who benefit so much from this existence of this field and our ability to use it in fair weather or foul, daylight or dark. The field, along with the other all weather fields installed by the City are a credit to the City and to its management's foresight.

Leaving the lights on when a field is not in use is wasteful and this should not occur. If there is a particular light that is shining beyond its required arc it can be adjusted to shine correctly onto the field.

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Problems solved.....

We all love this field and we particularly love playing under the lights. There's a little magic to the game after dark.

Thank you for taking the time to read this and please come see us play sometime.

I live on N. Early St. in Alexandria (since 2000). When I first moved here there was a "Park Ranger" of sorts who walked (and drove around) the park regularly, making sure the park was a safe and clean facility for families. So, my first suggestion is that I think you should once again have a Park Official at Fort Ward Park.

Also, the yellow "slow down" bumps that were installed to keep traffic from speeding through the park seem to be more of an obstacle for walkers, especially mothers with baby strollers and people with small dogs, and runners (I have seen, several times, a runner nearly fall from having to break stride to jump over or go around those bumps) than a real obstacle for speeders. Those who want to speed just speed between them. If you had a Park Ranger, he could monitor traffic (and you could take those bumps out), but if you cannot hire another official to monitor the park, then perhaps you can make "go-arounds" for people with strollers and runners, a paved area around each yellow speed bump, off to the side.

Also, that "manned" booth you put near the entrance is never used, and it makes the park look like a prison area. It is just ugly and useless.

The park needs a good "cleaning," also. There are small pieces of glass all over the place, which is dangerous for small children, pets, and older people, to name a few. There are piles of leaves, also, and other natural debris. Along that same line, the flowers and grounds do not seem to be maintained like it used to be when I first moved to the area. There are large sections that need reseeding, and flowers/trees need to be replaced.

The newer park benches are easily removed/moved, and the picnic areas are not nearly as nice now. The older, concrete picnic benches at least stayed in place. Perhaps you could bolt the picnic benches where they are supposed to be.

The cannons and Civil War items in the park do not seem to be maintained either. They are left out in weather to rust.

I don't know how you are going to address all of these issues, but you could hold a "Neighborhood Clean-Up Day" and also invite people to bring plants to plant. You could have a "Fort Ward Park Courtesy Team," and have T-shirts for those who agree to participate in this service, along with some other perks perhaps. There are a LOT of local older/retired people who walk at Fort Ward Park, and they are a great untapped resource for the City, in my opinion.

I know many people walk their dogs at Fort Ward Park. Perhaps you could make some of the unused portion of the grounds into a Dog Park for Small Dogs. There is no Alexandria Dog Park for SMALL dogs, and MANY people have small dogs in the City. People could apply for permits to use the Dog Park, and pay a fee. I know MANY people who would do this. This would pay for the upkeep of the dog park, and perhaps add funds to help improve other areas of the park. Or, you could have a volunteer group of people (who use the facility) maintain the area, and help with other plantings and improvements on a volunteer basis.

These are my suggestions. Thank you.



Dear Laura Durham:

It has come to my attention that you are soliciting comments with regard to the "use, protection, management, interpretation and enjoyment of Fort Ward Park." Therefore, I write on

this occasion to protest the planning direction of the City of Alexandria's Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities to make significant changes to Fort Ward Park that will

have an adverse impact upon those areas of the park that have already suffered too long from

neglect and where family graves are either unmarked, unprotected or have been completely

disrespected with debris, in my best judgment. Indeed, I also write to align myself with the

environmental concerns that have been relayed to you and other relevant parties by the Friends

of Fort Ward Park and neighboring community organizations like the Seminary Civic Association. As with yourself, I want what is best for this 32 acre historic site as the City of

Alexandria continues to move forward into the 21st century. However, it is the collective desire

of those who hold my position on this important issue that the long overlooked and neglected

history of the African Americans who worked this land, owned the land, were buried on the land,

and who were summarily displaced from the land, be restored to its rightful place of honor, as

well as be preserved and commemorated in a formal fashion, as we rapidly approach the

sesquicentennial of the Civil War.

As descendants of those African Americans who lived and worked in the Fort Ward and the

Virginia Theological Seminary communities, respectively, and who founded the Oakland Baptist

Church, our greatest fear is that the historic areas of the park, which contain marked and unmarked graves, will be further desecrated and the valuable, timeless contribution of African

Americans past will be lost forever, if massive, new recreational facilities at Fort Ward Park are

expanded before what should be mandatory archaeological and historical impact studies are

conducted and completed.

The Seminary Civic Association has already submitted for the official record a series of recommendations of improvements to Fort Ward Park that, if implemented, would show the

proper respect for the resting places of African Americans from the State of Virginia whose

connection to the state and to the City of Alexandria pre-date the Civil War. Hence, I take this

opportunity to formally request that the proper authorities act on these recommendations, so that

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we can begin to address the disgrace to the memory of these African American men and women of Virginia that has persisted for too long now.

Dear Ms. Durham,

My husband and I are members of the Alexandria Masters Soccer League and I am writing to you in support of the evening and night use of Fort Ward field for soccer games and practices. Both of my sons also play soccer and our entire family has greatly appreciated the use of this great facility.

Alexandria should support the health and well-being of its citizens by encouraging the growth of outdoor sports such as soccer and lacrosse through sufficient access to sports fields. The city should be applauded for making both Fort Ward and Minnie Howard turf fields with lighting.

Finally, the Masters Soccer League has been great for developing community ties. I am sure I am not the only member of this league who has written to the City about this issue.

Thank you for your consideration in this issue.

Dear Ms. Durham

I am writing to indicate my strong support for keeping the new all weather soccer field at Fort Ward Park open during evening hours. I am a resident of Alexandria and currently coach a U-16 girls soccer team in the ASA. In addition I am a player in the Masters Soccer League. Both of these teams are current beneficiaries of the great recreational asset the city has created at Fort Ward.

I have coached boys and girls teams in Alexandria for more than 10 years and have experienced the pain of watching children risk injuries on poorly maintained natural grass fields; the headache of rescheduling or cancelling games due to rain; and trying to get to our practices completed before dark because we had no access to a lighted practice facility.

I understand that some Alexandria residents are opposed to having the Fort Ward field open in the evening. However, I urge you to continue to allow this field to be used by Alexandria soccer players of all ages. This field is used by hundreds of players. It has given us a safe facility for games and practices; has significantly raised the quality of our training and team performance; has ensured that we are able to continue play in all weather conditions; and has extended the available practice times for all of our leagues.

I can say without hesitation that the soccer community of Alexandria now takes pride in being able to practice and play our games on the facilities at Fort Ward. Many visiting teams have made a specific point of complimenting Alexandria on investing in this facility.

I think it would be a shame to now deny access after waiting years for this field to become a reality.

On behalf of all the girls on the team I coach and the men and women of the team I play for, thank you for your consideration.

Dear Mr. Kincannon:

I am writing to provide comments on behalf of the Seminary Hill Association, Inc. (Seminary Hill) regarding Fort Ward Park (the Park). While we will continue to



press for better communications from the City regarding all meetings, policies, and planning efforts involving the Park, our most immediate concerns are as follows:

1. **Management of park uses:** Immediate steps must be taken to prevent the overuse and abuses of the Park that have occurred over recent years, most notably the excessive crowds, noise, trash, and alcohol consumption that occurred on Labor Day Weekend of 2007 and 2008. These situations must not be allowed to recur in the future, starting this Spring and Summer. Seminary Hill has been waiting since November 5, 2008 (when you, Pat Lidy and I met in your office to discuss Seminary Hill's concerns regarding Fort Ward Park) to see a concrete crowd control plan to prevent such situations. I would like to set a meeting with you and Captain Hassan Aden of the Alexandria City Police Department sometime in April to discuss this.
2. **Amplified sound:** Seminary Hill supports establishing a policy prohibiting amplification of any sound—music, voice, etc.—in the Park, with the exception of City-sponsored activities in the Amphitheater.
3. **Alcohol use:** Seminary Hill supports establishing a policy prohibiting alcohol use in the Park, with the exception of City-sponsored events.
4. **Protection of grave sites:** The deterioration of grave sites in the Park is deplorable. Immediate action should be taken to provide at least some minimal protection of these sites, and the identification and protection of other possible unmarked grave sites must be a top priority.
5. **Budget:** With the exception of the protection requested above for the grave sites, all spending under the current CIP budget should cease and desist until the public has an opportunity to comment on the forthcoming draft action plan and a new, approved Park plan is in place.

Thank you for your consideration.

Laura, I fully support keeping the lights on as I participate in the Alexandria Masters Soccer League for over-35 year old soccer players. This is a great opportunity for exercise and camaraderie amongst many Alexandria tax payers!

Hi,

I just wanted to let you know that I strongly support the use of lights at Ft. Ward Park. I belong to the Masters Soccer League and get great pleasure from playing in this league. I wouldn't be able to play if it wasn't at night since I have 3 children in various activities around Alexandria. If we only played during the day it would conflict with my childrens' activity and I would not have the wonderful



opportunity to play soccer with other people in Alexandria. It has really helped me connect with other people in my community.

Dear Ms. Durham,

I want to voice my support for using the Ft. Ward soccer field in the evening for the Masters Soccer League. The location has been, in many ways, ideal for our teams, and the access in the evening is important given the schedules of many parents who played in the league. The use of the field has had such a positive impact on the community, and I strongly urge that it continue. I understand there are several logistical concerns that have been raised by neighbors (e.g., lights on when there are no games, and lights shining into some neighborhoods), and because I can appreciate these competing concerns, I would be happy to work with the city to mitigate these problems.

Thank you, and please do not hesitate to contact me if you need anything further.

Laura,

I am writing to you because I have heard about complaints regarding the use of the Fort Ward soccer field at night. I wanted to express my concern that this use will be curtailed and let you know how extremely disappointing that would be to many of us in the community. Thanks to the City of Alexandria soccer leagues, I have for the first time in my life become engaged in a team sport. We have trouble getting access fields that allow for practice and games in rain-or-shine conditions, and this Ft. Ward field makes all the difference. I really hope you find a way to continue to make it available at night, given its high demand in this community.

Hello Ms. Durham,

I just want to let you know that I enjoy playing soccer under the lights at Ft. Ward Park. I believe it is good for Alexandria's adults and young people to see that Alexandria supports physical fitness and a healthy lifestyle. I'm hoping the situation with the lights can be worked out.

Hello,

My family and I play soccer and really enjoy using the field at Ft. Ward park. We heard there was an issue with the lights and want to voice our opinion as to how important that field is to all the teams in Alexandria. I guess I feel as if there may be some way to keep the fields lit and block the light that may be bothering such a small number of households. We have so few fields already...

