

13  
9-17-22

**CouncilComment@alexandriava.gov**

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**From:** CORNITHI HARRIS <c8harris@comcast.net>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, September 14, 2022 2:10 PM  
**To:** CouncilComment@alexandriava.gov  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL]Comments For Polk Parking Appeal

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
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Good afternoon,

My name is Cornithia Allen Harris. I am writing on behalf of my neighborhood within the area of 5325 Polk Avenue. I've owned a home on 5427 Richenbacher Avenue more than 18 years.

My neighbors and I not only maintain our property, we work in the community to maintain and clean city property surrounding our homes. We address issues and concerns that affect all who live in the city. We also dutifully pay taxes and contribute to the well-being of those in our city who are in need of assistance.

A simple request to park in front, or at most, near our home is not an unreasonable ask. At one time, the city attempted to regulate parking in the neighborhood along Polk and Richenbacher to alleviate stressful parking on the surrounding streets. It is now longer enforced. Eliminating nine parking on Polk Avenue may not appear to be much, but considering the domino effect it causes is the larger picture.

Most, if not all of you have the luxury of parking in front of your home. We have invested in our homes and our community for years. We are not temporary or just visiting.

I ask you to reject the parking commission's decision to eliminate the much needed parking in the area of 5325 Polk Avenue.

Respectfully,  
Cornithia A. Harris  
5427 Richenbacher Avenue  
Alexandria, VA 22304

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**CouncilComment@alexandriava.gov**

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**From:** Alex Goyette <alexmgoyette@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 12, 2022 12:36 PM  
**To:** CouncilComment@alexandriava.gov  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL]Comment for 9/13 Legislative Meeting

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Good evening Mayor Wilson & Members of Council,

Hoping you all had a restful summer away from council meetings!

I live on S Jordan St. and am a member of YIMBYs of Northern Virginia - a group that advocates for improving housing affordability in the region by enabling the development of more, denser housing.

As you return to your regular meetings, I hope that you will all prioritize support for dense, affordable housing types and the infrastructure investments required to sustain a growing city. In particular I hope you will prioritize the reforms included in the city's Zoning for Housing initiative, and show strong support for a Duke Street that prioritizes efficient and equitable transit and the safety of everyone who lives, works, and travels in the corridor.

Thank you,  
Alex Goyette  
S Jordan St

--  
Alex Goyette  
[YIMBYs of NOVA](#)  
[AlexMGoyette@gmail.com](mailto:AlexMGoyette@gmail.com)

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## CouncilComment@alexandriava.gov

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**From:** Sissy Walker <eswalker@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, September 07, 2022 9:00 AM  
**To:** CouncilComment@alexandriava.gov  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL]Polk sidewalk comments

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Dear Mayor and Council Members,

While it seems that we residents in single family homes on the West End have ample parking space, in reality some of us live on streets where parking at specific times of day has become very challenging. This is exacerbated by understaffing within the APD and the impacts of reduced enforcement of parking restrictions. This situation, combined with the sidewalk proposal for the identified stretch of Polk Ave, is only going to create a dangerous pedestrian environment for residents without driveways, who will now need to park far from their homes in the evening.

It seems to me that as a City, we over-rely on conceptual models, with their attendant funding sources, and under-rely on specific facts on the ground that could lead us to interventions that can be simpler and less costly, yet achieve the same results. Why not start with less costly interventions and determine their effectiveness before more drastic intervention?

Here are three simple interventions that could make this corner safer immediately:

1. Install a STOP sign at the top of N. Pelham
2. Reroute school buses onto Richenbacher rather than coming around the corner at the top of N. Pelham
3. Install crosswalk safety enhancements such as have been done on N. Jordan and the intersection of Taney and Pegram.

There are only a very few students who would be exiting from the upper condos. Younger children going to Polk would be accompanied by adults in any case, and older students heading to middle or high school can certainly cross an intersection that is clearly marked, to walk down the other side of Polk Ave. and then cross at Pegram with the crossing guard.

Your designated solution which eliminates significant resident parking seems like using a sledge hammer on a small nail. At great expense to boot.

Thank you for your consideration of my remarks.

Sissy Walker  
N. Latham St.

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows

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## CouncilComment@alexandriava.gov

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**From:** PATTY DURHAM <durbler@aol.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, August 12, 2022 2:35 PM  
**To:** CouncilComment@alexandriava.gov  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL]Comments for Polk Avenue Parking Appeal

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
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I would like to express my disagreement with the decision to use \$100,000 of City budget to add a sidewalk by cutting into the park grounds on the steep slope and reducing much needed parking spaces on Polk Avenue. There is a sidewalk on the other side of the road as well as a crossing guard at the corner 9 months of the year to help children cross the road if necessary. I believe this is inconsistent with the City's pledge to protect and preserve the environmentally fragile park terrain. As well, the townhouses and apartments nearby will be negatively impacted by the loss of nine parking spaces in that area. This of course will impact the whole neighborhood. Please reconsider and reallocate those precious funds to something more important and less harmful. I hear from my 311 inquiry that my street is not due for asphalt repairs until 2026. There are tall clumps of grass growing in the constantly expanding crevices that are throughout the street. Maybe reallocate the \$100k to speed up the street repairs.

Patricia Durham  
711 N Pryor Street, Alexandria, VA 22304 Durbler@aol.com

Sent from my iPhone

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Good morning Mayor and members of City Council!

My name is Nicole Radshaw and I live in the Polk neighborhood. My two children have walked to and from Polk and Hammond. One still goes to Hammond. And now one busses and walks home from the King Street Campus at the high school.

I am here to support the sidewalks on Polk Avenue and the removal of parking spaces. I believe that I was a part of that Safe Routes to School Audit in 2017 in place of our Polk PTA SRTS representative Anne O'Neill. We recommended ADA curb dips all over and a variety of crosswalks in many areas. We recommended landscaping in front of Polk Elementary to slow cars down. And we've seen those improvements. And we recommended a sidewalk on that corner of Polk Ave. Students walk through from the townhouses. I walk through to visit friends, former preschool students, and pick up Buy Nothing items. Let's make it safe to connect our community.

And after recently attending a summit about Vision Zero, I am now only more in favor of streets for people. Just because no one has died or gotten injured at this spot does not mean that we can't make it better to walk. Who needs to walk? Not all use cars-- children, an aging population, those who can't afford cars- these are our most vulnerable population. On a scale of safety, sidewalks are safer than crosswalks. Making people walk in the road or cross to the other side because of a missed connection is not safe and not

fair. Let's be proactive by giving that vulnerable population public spaces to move!

Sidewalks promote walking. Walking is healthy exercise as well as a mode of transportation. It's affordable and effective, good for your mental and physical health. Really, I say, make the sidewalks wider, make space for strollers to pass in each direction, make room for people to walk and stop and have benches, to move and gather all at the same time.

Streets are our largest public space.

Let's prioritize people over free car storage.

Build the sidewalks.

Thank you for your time!

September 14, 2022

I would like to thank the City Council for this opportunity to speak in support of the City Manager's recommendation for the installation of a sidewalk on Polk Avenue between Pelham Street and Palmer Place.

The comments my husband and I submitted via email during the public comment period are attached to the docket, so I will keep this short.

I support the new sidewalk project and believe it will enhance neighborhood safety.

We live in the townhouses at the top of the hill on North Pelham street - within probably 50 yards of the proposed project. Our daughter is two years old; we look forward to her attending Polk Elementary school in a few years and appreciate that she will be able to walk safely, if this project is approved. I have seen many children and other pedestrians forced to either cross the street on a 90 degree curve or walk in the road, a choice we make regularly, because of the lack of sidewalk on our side. During school drop off and pick up, this curve is very busy with both cars and school buses - I believe this is dangerous for children and all pedestrians.

I understand there is some concern from my neighbors about the removal of the 9 parking spaces. I do not share these concerns because I have rarely, if ever, seen nine cars using these spaces. When I prepared these remarks at 7:00pm this past Wednesday, September 14, there was one car parked on the side of the street where the proposed sidewalk would go, and only four cars total parked on Polk Street from the corner of Pelham all the way to the intersection with Polk elementary.

The removal of these 9 parking spots seems to be a very low cost to ensure all neighborhood children can walk to school safely.

Finally, this project was proposed after an walking audit under the Safe Routes to School initiative; without this sidewalk, there is no safe route to school for children coming from our side of the street – including from the Parkside community, to either Polk Elementary, or Hammond Middle School. Additionally, this project supports the city's commitment to Vision Zero, an effort to eliminate pedestrian injuries and deaths.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak today and want to thank the city for the many opportunities for engagement on this issue.



September 8, 2022

Dear Mayor Wilson, Members of the Alexandria City Council, and the Department of Transportation and Environmental Services,

The Alexandria Parent Teacher Association Council (PTAC) would like to voice its support for the sidewalk continuation project on Polk Avenue. As detailed in PTAC's April 18, 2022 letter to Mayor Wilson and the Alexandria City Council, one of PTAC's top priorities is to ensure that Alexandria City Public School (ACPS) students, families, and staff can travel to and from school safely.

Filling this sidewalk gap would provide a more continuous path for students and their families who walk to Polk Elementary and Francis C. Hammond Middle School. The project aligns with recommendations from the 2018 Safe Routes to School Walk Audit for Polk Elementary, and supports the adopted Alexandria Mobility Plan policy to provide a safe, connected sidewalk network.

PTAC applauds the City's Traffic & Parking Board for their unanimous vote in July to recommend removal of nine on-street parking spaces on Polk Avenue to allow for the installation of the proposed sidewalk. PTAC requests the City's continued support for the Polk sidewalk project in light of the appeal that will be heard at City Council Public Hearing on 17 September.

The March crash involving a nine-year-old student who sustained serious injuries at Jefferson Houston School, and the June crash in neighboring Fairfax County that killed two Oakton High School students and critically injured a third, highlight the importance of efforts like the Polk sidewalk project to strengthen pedestrian safety at and near Alexandria's schools. Such projects are even more critical in light of the recent ACPS guidance encouraging families returning for the 2022-2023 school year to consider alternatives to bus service due to the driver shortage.



PTAC appreciates your continued support for the Polk sidewalk project, as well as other efforts to improve pedestrian safety at and near Alexandria's schools.

Thank you,

Alexandria PTA Council Executive Board 2022-2023

Missy Estabrook, President  
Betty Cook, Treasurer  
Linda Williams, Secretary  
Sally Hunnicutt, VP of Advocacy  
Julia Sylla, VP of Programs  
Staci Rijal, VP of Communications  
D Ohlandt, VP of Outreach  
Maureen McNulty, Past President  
Dena Penner, Special Education Parent Liaison  
Greta Gordon, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Co-Chair  
Mariam Fikre, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Co-Chair

**From:** Michael Moss <mossm@cjcomm.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, September 15, 2022 9:02 PM  
**To:** CouncilComment@alexandriava.gov  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL]COMMENTS FOR POLK PARKING APPEAL

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City Council Public Hearing, September 17, 2022

Comments for the record on Polk Parking Appeal

Submitted by Michael Moss, 1000 N. Vail St., Alexandria

Docket Item 13: Appeal of 7/25/22 Decision for Removal of Nine Parking Spaces

Action requested: Overturn the Traffic and Parking Board's July 25, 2022, vote to remove nine parking places at 5325 Polk for purposes of providing an on-street sidewalk.

The removal of nine parking spaces along the proposed sidewalk on the north side of Polk Avenue just approved by the Traffic and Parking Board will eliminate a valuable resource for the community and will put more pressure on public parking for the entire area. Continually increasing overflow parking pressure from the large apartment complex in the neighborhood and increase in vehicles in general adds to the distance people have to go to find parking. Removal of these nine spaces will increase the radius of and put even higher pressure on the already affected public parking. I ask that the approval to remove these nine spaces be reversed. Several alternatives to the plan have been proposed and rejected. In the past the City has been very effective in finding alternatives in response to community needs, such as when they found a way to save several dozen parking spaces along Van Dorn Street in the Corridor C plan. I ask that they find way to save these nine.

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City Council Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to weigh in on the Traffic & Parking Board's decision to continue the sidewalk from North Pelham to Polk Street. I am in favor of the Traffic & Parking Board's decision.

My family and I have lived on North Pelham Street for more than 10 years. My husband and I have a daughter who was born while we've lived there and it's a great community in which to raise a child. However, the street is unsafe, especially on school mornings. At the top of the street where there is not a sidewalk, my dog and I have nearly been hit by cars numerous times on walks. While there is a sidewalk on the other side of the street, I usually try to avoid walking on the same sidewalks near others with my dog out of courtesy. Additionally, many of us tried to give space to other walkers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In my opinion, it would be safest to complete the sidewalk from North Pelham to Polk Street. While those opposed to this say that we don't have many children on our street walking to school, they fail to mention there are at least a hundred children who walk to school on North Pelham from other parts of our neighborhood. I am glad to provide my Ring doorbell footage to verify this. North Pelham is very dangerous on school mornings. Busses come by going at least 40 miles per hour if not more. Children trying to cross the street at the top of North Pelham – even with a crossing guard – would be put in danger (along with that crossing guard being in danger!).

Additionally, as an attorney for a medical organization, I must point out that the missing sidewalk between North Pelham and Polk is likely a violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act. While some of our neighbors insist that we don't currently have anyone with disabilities living on our street, what kind of message does that send? Inclusion is an action; if we want to make sure our neighborhood is habitable and welcoming to future residents, we need to make sure the engineering of our sidewalks is inclusive. We need to think not just of the present, but of the future.

My hopes are that a sidewalk can be made without much disruption to the green area at the top of our street. Other enforcement actions do need to be taken to ensure that residents of the street have parking. When I lived in Arlington, I was able to purchase a residential permit parking sticker, and only those with the sticker could park there after 5 pm. This should be an easy option for our street to ensure residents have parking access.

Unfortunately, the question of a sidewalk has been very divisive in our neighborhood. Those few who are opposed to the sidewalk have been forceful and overbearing to other neighbors to force them to their side (although I don't think many have responded favorably to their overbearing behavior). I don't want to cause further dissention, but it has been a very unpleasant experience.

I hope you will consider the future as you make your decision. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Erin Berry Philp

## CouncilComment@alexandriava.gov

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**From:** Neal Mollen <neal.mollen@protonmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, September 15, 2022 2:43 PM  
**To:** CouncilComment@alexandriava.gov  
**Cc:** Home Account  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL]File no. 23-0175 to be heard at 9/17 Meeting

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We reside, and since 1991 have resided, at 1048 Palmer Place. I am writing to address the pending plan to remove an estimated 9 parking spaces between Polk Street between Pelham Street and Palmer Place (your file number 23-0175)

As City records will reflect, parking has long been a recurring problem in this neighborhood. The city has failed to require developers responsible for apartments and condominiums in the area adjacent to our property provide adequate space for their tenants. Instead of taking care of their tenants, these developers have expressly urge them to park on the streets in the surrounding neighborhood--presumably the result desired by the city given its approach to the issue.

This leads to a recurring battle for spaces on the streets surrounding our house, and to cars parked so close to the corners that pedestrians and cars approaching stops signs cannot see traffic headed towards them. Enforcement has largely been ineffective because there simply are not sufficient alternatives available. No blame attaches to the apartment residents; they are just doing what they have been told.

The City's apparent solution to this recurring issue is not demanding more of developers, but instead to pare the already-inadequate number of spots available to homeowners and apartment dwellers alike.

I would like the city to send someone to actually assess the issue, after 11:00 pm. They would see first hand that diminishing the number of available spots is *not* a tenable solution to the neighborhood's needs.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of our views.

Sent with [Proton Mail](#) secure email.

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City Council Public Hearing, September 17, 2022  
 Comments for the record on Polk Parking Appeal  
 Submitted by Carol James, 1000 N. Vail St., Alexandria  
 Docket Item 13: Appeal of 7/25/22 Decision for Removal of Nine Parking Spaces

**Action requested: Overturn the Traffic and Parking Board's July 25, 2022, vote to remove nine parking places at 5325 Polk for purposes of an providing an on-street sidewalk.**

Rationale for action: This decision was made by the Parking Board following inaccurate assessments and presentation of needs by T&ES at the July 25 hearing.

Justification for rationale:

T&ES' July 25 testimony provided such comments as:

*There are no residences on the north side (of Polk) so parking on the south side is better used.*

If this were true, T&ES' predominant rationale for creating the sidewalk - connecting to the Parkside condominiums' privately-gated "walking path" - would be invalid (see first recommendation in below graphic). In fact, Parkside exits **on the north side of Polk** at Pelham **directly adjacent** to the affected area. See the following exhibit as presented:

Mail 7:30 PM Mon Sep 12 alexandria.legistar.com 100%

### Other Locations

Map ID	Issue	Recommendation
7	Gap in pedestrian network on Polk Ave	Construct sidewalk to connect to existing walking path and multi-family housing
12	Insufficient traffic control at Richenbacher Ave/ N Pegram St	Install 4-way stop sign per MUTCD Section 2B.04.09

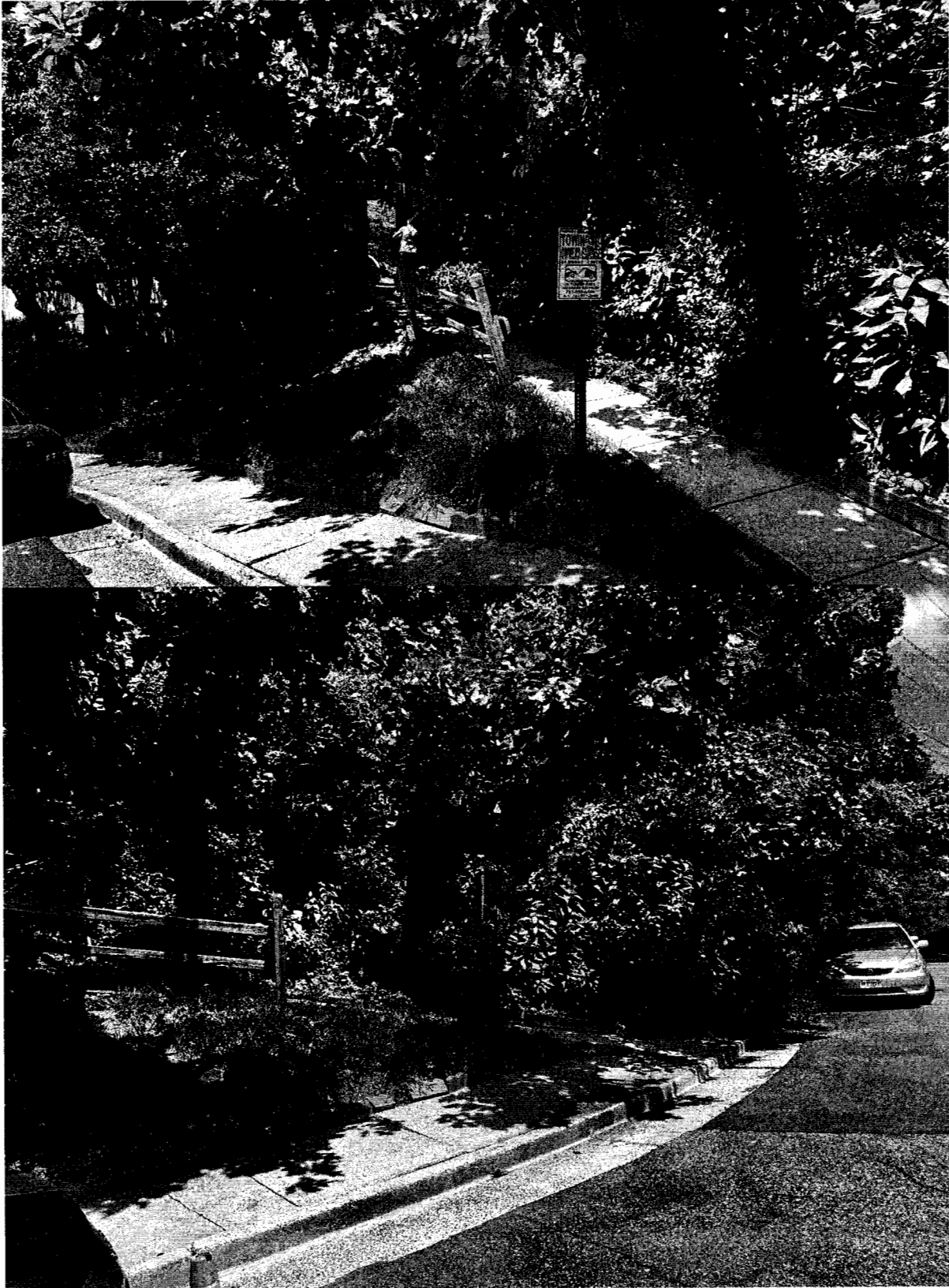
James K. Polk Elementary School  
 Walkabout Engineering Recommendations

● Short term recommendation  
 ● Medium/long term recommendation

Recommendation Timeframes  
 Short - 3-5 mo.  
 Medium/Long - 6 mo. - 3 yrs.

SAFE Routes to SCHOOL VIRGINIA

T&ES' goal of connecting to the encrypted-lock, private gate at Parkside omits any mention that that path fails to meet standards of design, construction, and maintenance for purposes of public use. A majority of Traffic Board members had not visited the premises. (Photos by Carol James, 2:19 pm, 7/20/22)



T&ES misjudged and thus misrepresented public parking on Pelham:

*In total, there are over 60 on-street parking spaces available for 27 homes, six of which have private driveways. Based on staff's observations of the area, even with the reduction of nine spaces, there is sufficient parking available to meet demand.*

See the following T&ES exhibit as presented. Note that the highlighted parking to the left is *NOT public parking but rather privately-owned space/s* belonging to each KMS townhouse. Towing is enforced by residents. This is the same graphic provided to T&ES's hired contractor to support its findings. While street parking availability affects all of KMS townhouse owners, fewer than one-fourth were included in any aspect of the T&ES interactions and studies.

Attachment 3:  
Parking Map



Legend:      On-street parking (Polk Ave and N Pelham St)      Proposed Parking Removal

What to do: (1) Overturn Parking Board approval to remove nine parking spaces. (2) Send this aspect of the "Safe Routes to School" project back for redesign. Revisit and redesign the plan with a more inclusive, accurate needs assessment.

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To hear comments by T&ES cited here, visit testimony presented to the Parking Board; video: [https://alexandria.granicus.com/ViewPublisher.php?view\\_id=29&coa\\_view\\_id=29&coa\\_clip\\_id=5555](https://alexandria.granicus.com/ViewPublisher.php?view_id=29&coa_view_id=29&coa_clip_id=5555)

## Gloria Sitton

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**From:** Shirley's Comcast <shirley-downs@comcast.net>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, September 14, 2022 10:39 PM  
**To:** canek Aguirre; Amy Jackson; John Chapman; Sarah Bagley; Alyia Gaskins; Justin Wilson; Kirk McPike  
**Cc:** Gloria Sitton; Jim Parajon  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL]Polk Parking Petition City Council Meeting September 17,2022  
**Attachments:** Questions for Council and Staff,Polk Park Parking Sept 17, 2022 City Council 2.docx; Ziemann Reply re Polk Park Questions.pdf; To the Members of the Parking Board.docx; Questions for T&ES RE Polk Park grant Safe Schools .docx; KMS Map from vacation of right-of-way.pdf

Dear Mayor and Council Members,

From discussions with many of you I gather that for most of you the two issues you care about the most are :

**A. The Sidewalk** which some of you see as necessary for the children to walk to Polk School.

**B. Environmental Issues.** Will it be possible to push the sidewalk into the hill which would eliminate more trees and tree roots to build the side walk and what are the environmental consequences?

### **A. The Sidewalk:**

#### **The need for an updated audit**

T&ES in its presentation to us at the BSVCA Zoom Meeting argued that this was necessary for children to walk to school along Polk. First as indicated by residents on the BSVCA Zoom call with T&ES only two children live on Pelham are sending their children to Polk. Two others on Polk are sending their children to Polk and they walk on the South side of Polk. That makes the issue how many children are walking from Parkside to Polk School? We do not currently know. The figures discussed in terms of the Walk Space to School that were in the graphic presented are from 2014 and the figures are out of date and need to be updated. But when asked how they planned to update them T&ES said we aren't. **T&ES got a grant from the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments to conduct Safe Routes to School Audits for the remaining schools but would not be using any of these funds to update the audit for Polk which includes children attending school from Parkside. Why wouldn't they use these funds to update the audit for children going to school from Parkside? Also when Ms. Carroll let the contract to do a daytime parking survey, the company doing the survey said that they could use an electronic tool to count the number of people, both adults and children, coming from Parkside down to Polk. Ms. Carroll indicated to the parking survey company that no she did not wish to do this. Why? This data could be useful because it would confirm how many people are actually using this particular space where the proposed sidewalk would go. This information is important otherwise why was T&ES conducting a Daytime Parking Survey when everyone for the community told her in the zoom meeting that *the real problem was parking at night.***

Residents from the KMS Townhomes, who are so greatly impacted by this decision to remove the parking spaces were not informed about the decision to remove the 9 parking spaces. Only people on Pelham, Polk, Palmer Place and some of the single family homes below Polk recieved the letters asking what they thought about the plans for the proposed



sidewalk in front of the Park. The 155 people who signed our petition, which you have before you for this hearing, oppose removing the 9 parking spaces.

From talking to teachers at Polk as well as local residents the community indicated that **about 95% of the children walking to Polk School, walk via Richenbacher and then turn up Pegram and then turn right to continue their walk to Polk.** That is where the foot traffic going to Polk school is and comes from. **It is not on the block of Polk where the Transportation Department has proposed to put in the sidewalk. They do this because it is easier than walking up the steep hill at Pelham.**

Also note that many parents drive their children to school, and many others take the bus, so probably the majority of the children going to Polk are not walking but are going via moter vehicle. You could get this kind of updated information by contacting Polk School. Teachers at Polk and TC Williams who signed our petition said you are correct I agree with you. Most children are not walking along Polk and Pelham. They are coming by bus or car or are walking via Richenbacher and Pegram and then turn into Polk to get to school.

So if we want to improve the walk for most children going to Polk put in Painted Cross- Walks and Signs not only on Polk as we proposed, but also at the intersection of Richenbacher and Pegram to try to both slow the speed of cars along Richenbacher and to make it safer for children walking to school and pedestrians in general. Keep bushes and trees pruned so that drivers can see pedestrians at the intersections, Residents raised these issues in a previous zoom call with T&ES staff held by BSVCA. They discussed the traffic on Taney and Richenbacher and how to make it safer for kids and pedestrians in general. I outlined my support for this in my original testimony to the Parking Commission on July 25, 2022 which I sent to all of you at that time. I also suggested that I felt that other intersections, where residents had raised concerns were a more pressing places where infrastructure investments were needed. I included the intersections on Taney and Richenbacher as well as at Sanger/Richenbacher and Van Dorn as in greater need of infrastructure investments than this area of Polk where the sidewalk was proposed. It would also be helpful if we had more Crossing Guards. but these are volunteers and it is difficult to get people to volunteer. A KMS resident, Charlotte Ross, did volunteer as a crossing guard for over 50 years at the corner of Pegram and Polk. Perhaps we need to look at incentives to get people to do this vital volunteer activity.

Alexandria has a policy for establishing priorities for where to put in sidewalks. It is outlined below:

## Sidewalks in Alexandria

While Alexandria is walkable in many areas, some streets have sidewalks on only one side of the street, and some have no sidewalks at all. The City of Alexandria is committed to fostering a safe, healthy, accessible walking environment by filling in these sidewalk gaps. Because of the number of gaps, engineering complexities, and limited funds, completing the City's sidewalk network will be a gradual process over many years.

Through the 2016 Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan, the City has identified numerous priority sidewalk projects that are critical to connecting people safely to their destinations. City staff are actively working to implement these projects using a combination of grant funds, local funds, and developer contributions.

## About the Neighborhood Sidewalk Program

In addition to the funds for priority sidewalk projects, some additional funding is available each fiscal year for the Neighborhood Sidewalk Petition Program. This program allows residents to request construction of a new sidewalk on local, neighborhood streets.

## **Questions for Members of the City Council to ask City Staff re Removal of 9 Parking Spaces in Front of Polk Park, City Council Hearing Saturday September 17, 2022**

From: Shirley Downs  
1007 North Vail Street  
Alexandria, VA 22304  
Phone: 703-845-7958 Landline no text  
Email: [Shirley-Downs@Comcast.net](mailto:Shirley-Downs@Comcast.net) Best way to reach

### **I. History**

In my testimony which I submitted to the Parking Commission for the July 25<sup>th</sup> Parking Board Hearing which I sent to you at that time I outlined, in considerable detail how the residents of the KMS Townhouses and adjacent single family homes fought for over 22 and a half years to ensure that we would be able to have a night time parking district because parking has always been so difficult and challenging in our neighborhood. This included multiple petitions to the Parking Commission which originally said we could not have the kind of Parking District they had in Old Town and Del Ray because they were dealing with commercial parking concerns. We persisted and had many many contentious meetings with all of the elected officials and the Staff of the Departments of Planning and Transportation and Environmental services as well as the City Attorney and the City Manager.

We kept coming back and would not go away because our parking problems persisted. It took a long time **but we persisted.**

**A.** We secured the right to exclusively park in the Access Road/driveway directly in front of our homes by making a deal with the City involving all of the elected officials and all of the city staff mentioned above by "Vacating the Right of Way" there. All of the elected officials, City Manager, City Staff, City Attorney, and the Departments of Planning and Transportation and the owners of Willow Run supported this effort, as did many of our other townhome and single-family home residents.

- 1.** Pave both the street and the access/driveway and allow us the right to use the leverage of the city contract when we had to pave it ourselves in the future.
- 2.** That the city would remain responsible for the maintenance of the sidewalks, curbs, and the medians where grass and the trees were planted.
- 3.** That residents were responsible for posting signs indicating where parking should not occur e.g. in front of handicapped dips, at curves, and next to fire hydrants as well as directly in front of our homes.

4. The City installed the handicapped dips and signs in front of the homes where handicapped residents resided throughout KMS.

**B.** Subsequently during the discussions over BRAC and continued concerns by residents that we still had extreme difficulty finding parking we battled on with the city until ***we secured a nighttime parking district in our neighborhood, this is in District 12 and 12 A. Again, all Council Members and related City Staff and the City Manager cited above supported this effort.***

**C.** We were also active in the efforts in securing the land that is now Polk Park. This was supported by KMS residents, BSVCA, Parkside, and all of the Civic Associations in the West End as well as all the City Council Members, City Manager, City Attorney, and the Staff of Planning, Parks and Rec, and T&ES.

## **II. Current Issues**

**A.** Residents asked for a public meeting with T&ES related to the issue of the sidewalk and parking spaces and asked for an honest discussion of possible alternatives. We also had the City Manager and several members of the Council to visit the site and made a suggestions re preserving the trees, and the parking spaces and placing appropriate signs to a) slow traffic and b) install a striped crosswalk about mid -block to guide children and adults across from the North to the South side of Polk so children could go to Polk School which is on the South side.

**B. City Staff never scheduled a Public Meeting.** Instead they scheduled a “Listening Session” with the BSVCA. Such meetings do not require official minutes. Also, in spite of the fact that members of the BSVCA subcommittee which was dealing with 5325 Polk sent in comments these were not made part of the T&ES public Record on their website. So, no resident going to the website would know that any other alternatives had been proposed. The absence of a Public Meeting, with minutes and attendance lacks transparency and violates government in the sunshine laws.

### **C. Questions for Staff**

1. *Ask Staff what is the cost benefit of spending \$100,000 on a sidewalk vs \$5,000 on a striped crosswalk and some signs indicating slow down and other signs indicating where to walk?*

I also believe in Smart Growth and having sidewalks for pedestrians but **there should be a balance**. I think the need for parking in this neighborhood outweighs putting in a sidewalk that would remove 9 parking spaces. Especially when there is a reasonable solution that would keep children and pedestrians safe. Children have to be on the South side of Polk to get to Polk school. This solution would allow them to do so safely. An audit of the School Children and adults using the proposed sidewalk has not been done. Why not?

2. *Why didn't Staff schedule a Public Hearing and why didn't the suggestions from the community and the concerns expressed by the community ever make it on to the website?*
3. *Why did you choose a listening session which does not require the recording of resident's questions concerns and suggestions? Since this was the only public community discussion why wasn't this publicized by a press release, signs in the community, on social media etc. ?*
4. *Why didn't Staff indicate that during the Listening Session with the BSVCA that:*

**a. All residents** on the Zoom Meeting with the BSVCA both those that supported the sidewalk and those that didn't were **opposed to eliminating ANY of the 9 PARKING SPACES.**

**b. That ALL residents** were concerned with **NIGHTTIME PARKING SPACES.** Ms. Alexandria Carroll the Safe Streets T&ES Staff Person was concerned about daytime parking and during her 20-minute visit during the day stated that there were 50 parking spaces. Everyone stated that the problem was not during the day but at night.

**c. Residents** on the zoom meeting call indicated that while people on Pelham, Polk, Palmer Place and some of the residents below Polk received letters from T&ES asking for their views related to the proposed sidewalk and loss of parking spaces no one else had. **Residents from KMS along Van Dorn, Vail, Terrill, and Richenbacher, who are profoundly impacted by taking away these spaces RECEIVED NO NOTICE THAT THIS WAS PLANNED. THEY NEVER RECEIVED ANY LETTERS OR NOTICE ABOUT THIS PROPOSAL.** That is one of the reasons why 155 people signed our petition asking you to overturn this decision by the Parking Commission.

5. *Ask Staff why they did not realize that if the 9 parking spaces were eliminated that it would so severely impact our nighttime parking situation that*

it would in effect break the agreement between Elected Officials, Staff, the City Manager and residents to insure that there was a **maximum amount of night-time parking in this area from Van Dorn, Vail, Terrill, Richenbacher, Pelham, Polk and the single family homes below Polk that we worked so hard for so many years to secure?** **TAKING THESE 9 PARKING SPACES IS A SNEEKY WAY FOR T&ES TO TRY TO OVERTURN THE PERMIT PARKING DISTRICT AGREEMENT WON BY RESIDENTS WITH THE APPROVAL OF DISTRICT 12 AND 12A. THIS AGREEMENT FOR A NIGHTTIME PERMIT PARKING DISTRICT WAS AGREED TO BY THE ELECTED OFFICIALS, PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION, THE CITY MANAGER AND ALL OTHER RELEVANT CITY STAFF.**

Note there had been no press releases, social media announcements or public signs around the neighborhood announcing that this change was being proposed and discussed. *So, no one who would be so severely impacted by this proposal knew anything about it!!!* **Residents see these issues as interrelated.** The loss of **ANY parking spaces has a profound impact on the ability of the residents of Van Dorn, Vail, Terrill, Pelham and Polk and the single-family homes below Polk to find parking at night.** It is so tight that after 9 PM there are virtually no parking spaces because when people cannot find parking on their own street they continue driving and looking until they find one. That takes at least 20 minutes. If you work late, go to school at night, go out shopping for food items, go on a date, or are attending a night time meeting or community event you will have trouble finding parking. Note this is not only a problem for KMS residents and single-family homeowners but also the residents of the rental property Willow Run. So, if you take away **any of the 9 Parking Spaces** it will be significantly worse for everyone. **Constituents will notice and there will be political consequences. Parking is the third rail in City quality of life issues.**

6. Ask Staff why the potential sources of funding for this project kept changing?
7. Ask Staff which is it? Why did the answer re the funding for the project keep changing?

8. *Ask staff since this project is now being done with city funds will the city rules related to the selection of and prioritization of sidewalk projects apply?*

First, we were told that the funding would come from the VDOT Safe Streets to Schools program, then we were told that no there was a bigger pot of money at the federal level that they were applying for under the recently passed Bipartisan Infrastructure bill. Then when I asked questions about funding resources in the “Listening Session” and in a list of Questions that I submitted to Ms. Carroll and her boss Chris Ziemann We were then told by Ziemann that the \$100,000 in funding for the proposed sidewalk would actually come from City funds.

9. *Ask staff since this project is now being done with City funds will the rules related to the selection of and prioritization of sidewalk projects apply?*

The rules listed re prioritization of sidewalk projects are attached at the end of this document.

10. *Ask Staff why they would ignore these criteria?*

11. *Ask Staff why wouldn't these priorities apply to this proposed sidewalk project no mater what source of funding either local, state or federal grant apply? Presumably these criteria were developed by some appointed commission or task force of local residents? **So, if they do not apply you are in effect not respecting the recommendations of local residents re prioritizing local sidewalk projects and the rules adopted by your own Staff and City elected officials.***

12. *Ask Staff why they would ignore these criteria and recommendations?*

13. *Ask staff why they are not collecting data about the number of children using this sidewalk to go to school? Why did they turn down the offer by the survey company they hired to collect data on the number of people both children and adults potentially using this sidewalk? During the presentation by T&ES at the BSVCA “Listening Session” Ms. Carroll showed graphics of the project which was called Safe Streets For All and was originally VDOT money. The graphics showed that a survey of the children using this sidewalk would be coming from Pelham, Polk and Parkside who would be using this sidewalk to walk to Polk School. I asked if they had updated the data because it was seriously out of date. Grants be they federal, state or foundations were very competitive and they would need updated data. It stated right on the graphic that they needed to update the school walk space data before submitting it.*

14. *Ask Staff why they switched the purpose from helping kids going to school to providing a sidewalk for adults and the general public? Why did they not use such*

*funds from the Metropolitan Council to finish the audit of the children who would use the sidewalk to get to Polk? After I raised this question, they switched from talking about children using it to adults using it. When the response from Mr. Christopher Ziemann came back., he stated that they were using the grant that they got from the Metropolitan Council of Governments, to conduct Safe Routes to School Audits at the remaining school districts. **Why did they drop Polk from the list of priority projects?***

**15. Ask Staff why they would choose not to include securing updated information for the number of people using this proposed sidewalk using these funds for Safe Walk to Schools Audits and/or the counter at the gate between Polk and Parkside which the contractor they contracted with to do a daytime audit, suggested?**

**16. Ask staff how much the daytime parking survey she commissioned cost? Why she did not act on the suggestions by the people conducting the survey to amend the contract to collect information re parking on Richenbacher and other streets and why she turned down their offer to place a data collector at the entrance of the gate from Parkside to Polk to determine how many children and adults were using this area for the proposed sidewalk to walk to Polk or Hamond schools? He proposed this as an amendment to the contract but was turned down? Why? Could it be because not that many people, both children and adults would be using it? During the Zoom Meeting residents indicated only 2 children lived on Pellham and 2 on Polk. So, the balance of the children walking to school would come from Parkside.**

**17. Ask staff why they were doing a daytime parking survey when ALL local residents had stated that the problem was with night time parking? That is when the survey should be done. Otherwise it is wasting taxpayer dollars. The one useful thing would have been counting the children and adults using this area to walk. MS Carroll specifically rejected this suggestion. Why? It would have been the only useful thing from a daytime parking survey.**

**18. Ask Staff why**

**19. Parking is not being enforced in Parking District 12 and 12 A? At the Hearing at the Parking Commission we learned from the Vice Chair of the Parking Commission that of the 12 Parking Districts in the City ( there are 14 now because 2 more parking districts have been added) only District 12, 12A did not have**

*any parking enforcement. All of the other parking districts had enforcement. This is discrimination against us and our Parking District and is why we asked for overturning the Parking Boards decision and the enforcement of parking in our area, District 12,12A and for a night time parking survey to be done. That is what the 155 people who signed our petition asked you to do.*

- 20.** *Ask Staff why there is no additional funding in the budget for lighting, snow and ice removal, , the cutting of tree limbs, and park maintenance issues such as removal of poison ivy? During the session with the BSVCA and during the Parking Commission hearing Jack Broward of Parks and Recreation indicated that they had no money in the budget for lighting, removal of snow and ice, or the ability to put in things like permeable pavers which might allow the tree roots to suck up more water and top water from running over the sidewalk and down the sidewalk and street and across to the homes across and below the park. He also said that they had no additional funding to build a retaining wall next to the sidewalk.*

Basically, I think that T&ES decided that this project was less expensive than another situation where they were being asked to consider putting in a sidewalk where none currently is because it was relatively short and could be done less expensively. In other words, it was a way to record a “win” according to the Smart Growth Safe Streets bible. They want to do this while sticking Parks and Recreation with the cost of maintenance and all other costs. Parks and Rec does not have as much clout with the city administration as other departments like ACPS, Planning and Transportation and Environmental services. So, they lose during budget time, even though the public often indicates that they would like more money to go to Parks and Recreation because they greatly value the parks, the arts, and the sports and other programs such as dance and yoga offered by Parks and Rec.

- 21.** *Ask Staff if someone slips and falls on the snow and ice of this sidewalk does the City have liability insurance? What department has to pay for the insurance and what departmental budget has to pay if the City gets sued for injuries from slipping on the snow and ice?*
- 22.** *Ask Staff if they considered using permeable pavers and a reconfiguration of the steep path from Parkside to Polk Street as a way to make it easier for residents as well as suck up more water and runoff and ensure that the toe hold of the tree roots stays intact? If not why not?*



- 23.** *Ask Staff about the discussion relating to cutting into the tree roots on the stability of the trees above the sidewalk and the stability of the slope and the potential for more trees to fall further up the slope?*

During the BSVCA meeting and the Parking Commission hearing **when people asked if it was possible to cut further into the roots of the trees to save the 9 parking places. Parks and Rec said no.** Originally 9 trees were to be removed, now 5 will be removed but they will still keep the toehold of roots. If the sidewalk was pushed further into the park it would result in trees coming down further up the slope and damage the structural integrity of the slope so that more trees would come down further up the hill. This is because of the nature of the soil and the steepness of the slope. (It is also one of the reasons the community opposed further development on the Polk site when Dwight Dutton, the previous owner of Parkside and the area known as Polk Park proposed additional condos/townhouses for this site. He tried to get the Planning Commission to approve this several times and it was always defeated.)

Also, with climate change we are getting more storms with more rain coming down rapidly and more high wind which causes trees to uproot and tree branches coming down. This happened recently and branches came down right where the sidewalk is proposed to be.

- 24.** *Ask staff if this sidewalk project was approved in a previous budget or if this is a new project?*

**Transparency and local input by residents is not part of the City of Alexandria's Civic Culture and it is the reason why people often say Staff and the City Manager and the Council are not listening and do not care what their concerns and priorities are.** The Staff stacks the deck using the Budget Process and Commissions.

This is why at various times local residents ***explode*** as they did over Council having a secret vote to approve DOD building the BRAC Building, Another example was TE&T Staff 's insistence on putting Bike Lanes all along Seminary Road even though local residents were opposed. The blow back from that was that ***ALL*** of the Civic Associations in the City opposed these plans. Staff forced it through in the teeth of a great deal of public opposition and there were many angry constituents and tense meetings. As a result, the Council approved this process which you are participating in on September 17, 2022 via the City Council Hearing which is reviewing the actions of the Parking Commission. A further result was with BRAC and the Seminary Road Blow Back was that there was considerable turnover in City Council Seats. This could well happen again if residents feel that they are not supported by City Council Members re the Parking 9 Parking Spaces at Polk. ***So, this is a very***

***consequential vote which will be watched by constituents!!!***

**D. THE PARKING COMMISSION VOTED AGAINST THE PROVISION OF KEEPING THE 9 PARKING SPACES. WHY? CONTRIBUTING FACTORS:**

1. The Parking Commission is programmed by staff to vote the way Staff dictates,
2. The Parking Commission is larded with members who are bikers and devotees of Smart Growth and the Safe Streets Policy approach.
3. Several Parking Commissioners were brand new and thus were not about to buck Staff.
4. Two members of the Commission drove by the site but did not talk to any residents. The others did not bother or know anything about the issue except what they were told by Staff. One, the Chair, came and spoke to residents and we thought he agreed with the recommendation's residents suggested re doing a striped crosswalk for \$5,000, signage to slow the traffic, signs to indicate where to cross and investing the balance of the \$100,000 proposed to be spent on the projects elsewhere. We thought these were reasonable, cost effective, suggestions and that he and the City Manager were persuaded by these arguments. We were wrong. The Chair ended up not supporting us. He saw that other people were not going to vote with him. Probably because they were not very familiar with the site and the parking problems. We hope the City Manager does share our views.
5. The City provided no publicity or press releases or public signs or put up or notices on the light poles or telephone poles indicating what was going to happen to the neighborhood re the elimination of 9 parking spaces at Polk. Normally these are put up way ahead of time. So, most residents were completely unaware of the impact of this hearing and decision re the removal of the 9 Parking Spaces and the impact on the search for parking each night.
6. There was also no effort to communicate with those impacted. In addition to the people from KMS, Parkside, and the local single-family homes and the residents from Holandtowne townhouses the other people who will be greatly impacted are the residents who rent at Willow Run. They will be profoundly impacted by the loss of parking spaces. But because many are immigrants, whose first language is not English, they know little or nothing about the potential loss of parking. So, they did not show up at the Parking Commission on July 25, 2022. Nor do I expect them to show up on Saturday Sept 17<sup>th</sup> for the same reason. There was no posting of information, no translation into Spanish about what is proposed and its impact on them. I did try to speak to a few people from Willow to alert them but I got two answers. "I do not speak good English" and "No I do not like to complain." Many

come from countries where the government has jailed people, persecuted them and even killed them so they have a strong inclination not to trust local government.

**From:** Christopher Ziemann christopher.ziemann@alexandriava.gov  
**Subject:** RE: [EXTERNAL]Follow up Questions after BSVCA Meeting with T&ES re the Grant Application to VDOT for funds for the Polk project  
**Date:** July 22, 2022 at 2:36 PM  
**To:** Shirley's Comcast shirley-downs@comcast.net, Alexandria Carroll Alexandria.Carroll@alexandriava.gov

CZ

Hello Ms. Downs,

Thank you for emailing and I apologize for the delay in responding. As you can imagine we are very busy even though it's summer with traffic safety projects across the City. In reading your credentials, it's great to have someone so experienced with grant applications in the community who is willing to offer suggestions. It's also helpful to know there is support for traffic safety in the community as we are working hard to reach the goal of eliminating traffic-related deaths and serious injuries by 2028.

In reading your letter, you refer to "Safe Streets to Schools Grants," and I wanted to clarify this. The City is applying for the federal "Safe Streets for All" grant to fund further safety recommendations from the Safe Routes to School audits from 2017. These have not been specifically defined yet, but they will be more expensive infrastructure projects that haven't been done in house yet (such as sidewalks, moving curbs, etc.). In addition, the City was just awarded the Transportation and Land Use grant from the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments to conduct Safe Routes to School audits at the remaining school locations. To be clear, the Polk Ave Sidewalk project is being funded with local capital funds, so there is no application to include additional projects. That being said, we look forward to working with the community to address other safety issues like the ones you've brought up.

In terms of your questions regarding data on school children and school populations. This would be nice data to have, however would require a lot of staff resources that could be spent addressing the other safety issues like the ones you bring up. I know that you have very real concerns about the Polk Avenue park and staff is working to address them to the best of our abilities. City Council has directed us to prioritize safety for all users, which is why we are working to maximize safety for all residents while also reducing impacts.

Thank you again for your interest and your questions, and even though we disagree with the merits of this sidewalk project, I'm glad to know that we agree on the importance of traffic safety in general.

Best regards,

Christopher Ziemann, AICP (*he/him/his*)  
Division Chief, Transportation Planning  
Department of Transportation & Environmental Services  
City of Alexandria  
Office: 703.746.4083  
Mobile: 703.819.7082  
[christopher.ziemann@alexandriava.gov](mailto:christopher.ziemann@alexandriava.gov)

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**From:** Shirley's Comcast <shirley-downs@comcast.net>  
**Sent:** Monday, July 18, 2022 11:08 AM

**To:** Alexandria Carroll <Alexandria.Carroll@alexandriava.gov>; Christopher Ziemann <christopher.ziemann@alexandriava.gov>  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL]Follow up Questions after BSVCA Meeting with T&ES re the Grant Application to VDOT for funds for the Polk project

You don't often get email from [shirley-downs@comcast.net](mailto:shirley-downs@comcast.net). [Learn why this is important](#)

Hello,

My name is Shirley Downs and I have some additional questions re the application for funding. It would be very helpful to be able to talk to you as soon as possible. I am also preparing additional information relating to the Park at Polk, These include, parking problems within the KMS Townhomes, Parkside, the Willow Run rental properties to the south along Richenbacker, and the other surrounding communities to the North and the single family residences in this area. My additional comments will relate to the very real problems that local residents have had with water damage to their homes and properties caused by the sloping natures of the land in this area and the quality and characteristics of the clay soil. All of these issues are very relevant to this project. Finally I will provide information related to greenspace and the trees in the Polk Park.

Because local budgets are tight I know that Alexandria is seeking funding where ever it can be found to address the needs of our residents. As it happens during my career I worked to secure local, federal, state and foundation funding when I worked for both a rural and NYC Congressional Representatives. Additionally when I lived in the NYS capital I was also intimately involved in interagency reviews of applications for state grant funding for a wide variety of programs and initiatives. So I am very aware of what it takes to prepare grant proposals and the kind of criteria the states employ when awarding competitive grants. I would be interested in speaking to appropriate T&ES staff to see if I might make some helpful suggestions in the preparation of applications to secure state and federal funding.

Thank you I look forward to speaking to you about these issues.

Shirley Downs  
1007 North Vail Street  
Alexandria, VA 22304  
Phone: 703-845-7958 Land Line no text.  
Email: [shirley-downs@comcast.net](mailto:shirley-downs@comcast.net)

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Questions for The Department of Transportation and Environmental Services Relating to Grant Funding to Facilitate Investments in Infrastructure and provide other Resources to Enhance the Safety of School Children and Residents on Our Streets.

From: Shirley Downs  
1007 North Vail Street  
Alexandria, VA 22304  
Phone: 703-945-7958  
Email: shirley-downs@comcast.net

- 1) I understand that there are several potential sources of funding:
  - a) Funding via the Neighborhood Sidewalk Grants
  - b) Funding via the Safe Streets to Schools Grants
  - c) Other potential sources of funding such as the STP-Urban Program, and LoCip
- 2) Can T&ES provide information on how much potential funding is available to Alexandria via each of these programs?
- 3) What are the filling deadlines for grant applications for funding under each of these programs?
- 4) T&ES indicated they plan to apply for funding under the Safe Streets to Schools Grant. In reading about the kinds of initiatives that are funded under these grants and in looking at the proposal you attached there seem to be a number of elements you intend to seek funding for. Can you break down the projected budget outlays for improvements outlined for each of these elements including hardscape, the sidewalk, infostructure, signs, the trimming back of trees and bushes for greater visibility, improved lighting and any other elements in this application you hope this grant will pay for as well as the total dollars you hope to receive from this grant.
- 5) Are there any matching funds from the city or other groups required or encouraged in this application as an indication of community interest and support?
- 6) In your description of the data provided related to the number of children who would be walking to school it was indicated that this data was collected in 2014. It is now 2022 so the data is 8 years old. We know that as a result of the corvid pandemic local enrollment in some local schools has dropped. Some families have moved because they lost or changed jobs, because the death of family members or because the cost of housing has increased so much or because some families decided to enroll their children in a private or religious school.

Has enrollment at Polk School increased, decreased, remained the same as it was when this data was collected in 2014? At the end of the summary of your plan about the number of children involved it was stated that this data would need to be updated. How do you plan to do this?

- 7) Some options to improve the data as it applies to Polk Street would be to survey the residents who:
  - a) Reside at Parkside -This could be done by asking the Manager of Parkside to survey the residents and ask how many of the families there had school age children attending Polk. It is possible that since this is a rental property, they already have this kind of data in the leases that residents signed or a letter could be sent to tenants asking for this information and listing why it was important.

- b) Reside in the homes on Polk, the townhouses and single-family homes living on Pelham, and the single-family homes immediately below Polk and above Richenbacher
- 8) At the same time we are asking these home owners about the number of school age children who reside in these locations we could also ask these homeowners if they had drainage problems on their properties. If this required them to put in a sump pump, fix foundation cracks, install French drains, or pay for other improvements related to moisture, mildew, and water run off related to the steep hills built on clay that our homes are built on.
- 9) Can Additional Elements be added to this application for Transportation infrastructure funding? There are two other dangerous intersections which in our West End community.
  - a)As you are aware from your conversations with BVSCA President Ashley Dalton you are aware of public safety concerns for children and local residents at the intersection near her home on Taney Avenue relating to cars speeding, not stopping at stop signs and the fact that foliage can obstruct a drivers vision of small children, pets and other residents along this route and at this intersection.
  - b)A second very dangerous intersection is at the Corner of North Van Dorn and Richenbacher Ave. There is very, very heavy traffic along Van Dorn it is very difficult to turn from Richenbacher onto Van Dorn and vision is also obstructed for drivers coming via Sanger Avenue and attempting to turn onto Van Dorn. There have been many near accidents as well as actual accidents involving cars trying to make these turns. There is a major bus stop there right in front of the KMS Townhomes that face Van Dorn. Commuters, and children walking home from school in that area are at great risk as are the women pushing strollers with children who have been on the bus. The streetlight needs to be timed both to improve traffic flow and to improve safety. Additionally, there are gaps in the sidewalk all along the side of Van Dorn nearest 395 running North. There are also areas where bushes and tree limbs need to be trimmed back to improve visibility and provide safety from oncoming cars. There are also areas where the sidewalk has heaved so much that it is difficult to walk, ride a bike or push a stroller.

If these projects could be incorporated into the application for funding it would greatly enhance the safety of children going to school and the safety of local residents.

# Sidewalks in Alexandria

While Alexandria is walkable in many areas, some streets have sidewalks on only one side of the street, and some have no sidewalks at all. The City of Alexandria is committed to fostering a safe, healthy, accessible walking environment by filling in these sidewalk gaps. Because of the number of gaps, engineering complexities, and limited funds, completing the City's sidewalk network will be a gradual process over many years.

Through the 2016 Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan, the City has identified numerous priority sidewalk projects that are critical to connecting people safely to their destinations. City staff are actively working to implement these projects using a combination of grant funds, local funds, and developer contributions.

## About the Neighborhood Sidewalk Program

In addition to the funds for priority sidewalk projects, some additional funding is available each fiscal year for the Neighborhood Sidewalk Petition Program. This program allows residents to request construction of a new sidewalk on local, neighborhood streets.

## Before Submitting a Neighborhood Sidewalk Application

### REVIEW THE ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Before submitting a petition for a sidewalk on your street, be sure it meets the eligibility criteria listed below.

- The street may not already be on the list of priority sidewalk projects from the Bicycle & Pedestrian Master Plan.

It's important to think about where you would like to have the sidewalk built. Here are some general considerations for locating and assessing conditions for a new sidewalk:

- New sidewalks must either connect to existing sidewalks or end at a cross-street. A new sidewalk cannot end in the middle of a block.
- Look closely at the area where you want to have new sidewalk built. If you have any of the following impediments, sidewalk construction **might not** be feasible given available funding:
  - Large trees or robust landscaping
  - Excessive slopes
  - Fences, walls, stairs
  - Poles, hydrants
- Sidewalks are constructed and assessed on a street-by-street basis. Sidewalks generally cannot be petitioned for a whole neighborhood; each street must be petitioned individually.

## Submitting a Neighborhood Sidewalk Application

Once you have read the information above and determined that a Neighborhood Sidewalk Petition is the appropriate course of action, [click here](#) to access the application. The application process is outlined below:



1. Sidewalk applications are evaluated annually. Applications are due by December 31 and will be evaluated in January. Applications that are approved will then be incorporated into the work plan for the upcoming fiscal year.
2. Submit your application. Applications must include signatures from neighbors indicating whether or not they would support the project. Of these signatures, 51% of residents in the project area must indicate support for the project. By submitting the application, you agree to be the Project Champion and accept responsibility for any additional neighborhood outreach.
  1. Note: for multifamily housing, the Project Champion should collect a signature from the property manager.
3. Sidewalk projects will be prioritized based on a variety of considerations, including, but not limited to:
  1. Proximity to schools, parks, or community centers
  2. Proximity to transit
  3. Proximity to other key pedestrian generators, such as retail or employment
  4. Presence of a sidewalk on one side of the street (preference is generally given to streets with no sidewalks on either side)
  5. Speed and volume of traffic along route
  6. Network connectivity (i.e. would the new sidewalk make new pedestrian connections and allow people to reach nearby destinations more easily?)
  7. Cost and feasibility of design and installation
  8. Neighborhood support for project
4. If your project is selected, the Project Champion must notify all households adjacent to the proposed sidewalk of the project. City staff will provide outreach support by creating an informational flyer for the Project Champion to share with neighbors.
5. Design and construction times can vary depending on a variety of factors, such as design complexities, crew availability, and weather conditions.

**<https://www.alexandriava.gov/transportation-planning/neighborhood-sidewalk-program>**

**To the Members of the Parking Board, Mayor and City Council,  
City Manager, and Members of Transportation and  
Environmental Services Department**

**Re: Parking Board Hearing on July 25, 2022, 7 PM**  
The Polk Park Proposal, Item 9 on the Docket

Those wishing to submit testimony to the Members of the Parking Board should submit written comments by 7 PM Sunday July 24<sup>th</sup>, 2022 to [alex.block@alexandriava.gov](mailto:alex.block@alexandriava.gov). He can also arrange for those who wish to testify in person at the hearing to be able to do so by contacting him at this email address. Testimony is presented in the order that requests to testify are submitted. Mr. Block's Mobil phone is: 571-289-9135, his desk phone is: 703:746-4086. Try to get your testimony to him as early as possible so it can be shared with the Members of the Parking Board. EG 24 hours ahead of time.

From: Shirley Downs  
1007 North Vail Street  
Alexandria, VA 22304  
Phone: 703-845-7958 Land Line, No Text  
Email: Shirley-Downs@comcast.net

I hope that the Members of the Parking Board will have a chance to come and look at the site at 5325 Polk prior to reviewing this proposal on Monday to give you a better understanding of the site and the impact of this proposed sidewalk. I have been told that this testimony is too long but I wanted to give you an understanding of the history of parking issues and planning and transportation issues in this area. While Parking Board Members, City Council Members and T&ES staff may change many residents stay the same. We have the historical memory of these many policy issues which impact our community.

I wish to express my opposition to the Department of Transportation and Environmental Services recommendation to put in a sidewalk at 5325 Polk at the front of what T&ES refers to as Polk Park at a cost of \$100,000 dollars. This proposal would remove 9 parking spaces on the North side of Polk, and require 5 trees to be removed to accommodate the installation of a new sidewalk in front of Polk Park. I am only opposed to putting in a sidewalk that would remove 9 parking spaces and 5 trees at 3535 Polk. I also think it should be possible to put in a crosswalk between the North side of Polk and the South side of Polk either at the corner or somewhere in the middle of the block. This would cost about \$5,000. Please note that children going to Polk have to cross the block anyway to get to the Polk School which is on the South side of Polk.

Removal of the trees will also increase the likelihood of slope failure and collapse. This information comes from Anthony Fleming who was commissioned by the City of Alexandria to do an analysis of the soil and topography conditions in our city which is contained in the Geologic Atlas of the City of Alexandria. This is used by the city to provide information about soil, water, and environmental issues that can have an impact on infrastructure projects. This kind of information was used by opponents when

developers were trying to build townhouses on this slope. Below is the link to the document which Anthony Fleming prepared for the City describing the composition of the soil and topography. You can look at the color coded map and see what kind of land our homes and the park are built upon.

<https://media.alexandriava.gov/docs-archives/recreation/parks/plate=4=potomac=formation=map.pdf>

This section describes the Potomac Formation which is the history of how Alexandria's geography was formed starting in the Cretaceous period, and how and why our soil behaves as it does.

<https://media.alexandriava.gov/docs-archives/recreation/parks/plate=4=potomac=formation=expanded=explanation.pdf>

When asked about the lack of any maintenance plan for this sidewalk Jack Broward, of Parks and Recreation, indicated there were no funds in this Grant dedicated to snow and ice removal or lighting on this piece of proposed sidewalk in this project or in his department's budget. What happens if someone slips and falls on ice and sues the city on this sidewalk in front of a city owned property? Money needs to be provided for maintenance to Parks and Recreation if there is a sidewalk in front of a public park.

Note homeowners shovel the sidewalks in front of their KMS homes. This involves, shoveling snow, chipping ice, putting down snow melt, and relying on city street lights to provide lighting for pedestrian safety.

One of the reasons I am opposed to the removal of the trees to build the sidewalk is that the roots of trees and bushes help to suck up water and stabilize soil on steep slopes. Because of climate change we have had extreme swings in our weather with storms that dump large amounts of rain over short periods, and high winds that take down tree limbs and even upend trees when their roots fail. This is particularly a problem because our clay soil does not percolate well and water tends to run down the hill.

KMS residents know all about this problem. We have steep grades but they are nothing like the very steep grade at 5325 Polk. On my side of Vail Street heavy rains have sometimes caused basement recreation rooms to flood necessitating the replacement of wall board, and carpet at great expense. Two owners had to install sump pumps. Other residents had to install French drains to channel water away from the basement patio doors to keep water out of their basements. The owners of one home spent \$15,00 on French drains. I have drainage problems in both my front and back yards. Two different landscape designers said it would cost thousands of dollars to put in French drains in the back of the house and to put replacement trees and bushes in the front yard to help to retain the soil. Because of covid I kept people away and have delayed these construction projects.

At a zoom meeting hosted by the BSVCA on July 13, 2022 I asked Alexandria Carroll, the lead T&ES representative for the Safe Streets to School initiatives if the department had updated information relating to how many school children would use this route to the Polk School. The draft plan prepared in 2016 for this Safe Streets Grant Application indicated that the Last Travel Tallies and Parent Surveys were collected in 2014 and that updated information would be required to be collected for the application to VDOT for federal Grant funding under SRTS, the Safe Routes to School Program. This made the data referenced 7 years out of date. She said that at this time there are no plans to update the data and indicated that we submit any additional questions we had by Sunday July 17<sup>th</sup>. I did submit questions on July 18<sup>th</sup> but did not receive a reply to my questions and suggestions from Christopher Ziemann Chief of Transportation Planning, DT&ES or her until July 22, 2022. At that time, he indicated that they were applying for a Safe Streets For All (SS4A) Grant from the federal Department of Transportation not the Safe Streets to School Program that the original draft application referenced. The Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) grant program is part of the Bipartisan Infrastructure program recently passed by Congress. Note these are competitive grants and because of the passage of this legislation the federal pot currently has more dollars available. Both state and federal Safe Streets Grant applications we might apply for have grant analysts who are going to want such information. Below is descriptive information about the grant Alexandria intends to apply for.

<https://www.transportation.gov/grants/SS4A>

In the questions and recommendations, I submitted to T&ES I volunteered to survey all the residents along Pelham, Polk, and the single-family homes below Polk and above Richenbacker as well as Parkside to get a more accurate count of the number of children walking to Polk School. We could also ask how many children might be walking up to Hammond School using this route.

Among the questions I asked T&ES was what date the application needed to be submitted by to apply for the SRTS Grant? What were the projected costs of the other elements of the Grant outlined in the Draft Plan they plan to submit besides the \$100,000 sidewalk? Since their own draft application referenced in this hearing stated that the number of students projected to use the sidewalk had to, by their own admission, be updated why hadn't they surveyed the residents of Parkside Pelham, Polk and the single family homes below Polk and above Richenbacker about how many children who would walk to Polk School were living in the homes along this route?

In his email Mr. Ziemann indicated that while it would be nice to have such updated data, they were directing staff to collect other data addressing other safety issues like the ones I brought up in my questions and at this time he does not have the time and staff to do this. I again offer my services to collect such data from residents on Pelham, Polk, and the adjacent single-family homes and Parkside so that the department can submit this updated data as part of their application. My labor is free and I have collected such data before for other grant applications. I want to help.

All of the densely populated communities in this part of the West End have problems with the limited availability of parking. These include the Willow Run rental apartments, KMS, Hollandtowne, Parkside at Alexandria, Overlook, and Seminary Towers. The parking problems in the KMS Townhomes located across from the Willow Run rental apartments on Richenbacker are particularly acute. KMS includes, Townhomes on North Van Dorn, North Vail, Terril, and North Pelham. In the late 1990's I, together with other neighbors, began protesting to local elected officials, T&ES, the BSVCA about the problem. I coordinated the efforts of KMS neighbors in a long campaign to have our concerns addressed. It took about 3 1/2 years of effort with multiple meetings with City Staff, local elected officials, and multiple petitions to the Parking Board. This was during the time that Kerry Donley was Mayor.

We originally petitioned for permit parking such as was available down in "Old Town" but this was denied. Part of the problem is that in 1968 when our KMS townhomes were constructed the service roads next to our houses were conveyed with a public right of way. This meant that although we were supposed to have at least one parking space in front of each house and we owned this land and paid taxes on it that anyone could park on our service roads as well as the street. We kept meeting with members of City Council and Rich Baier head of T&ES about this problem and finally secured approval of a plan that would convey the service roads to the KMS homeowners through the vacation of the public right away so that they could have the exclusive right to one parking space in front of their own homes.

The City also agreed to repave all of the service roads and the streets which had not been done since they were built in 1968, they also put in handicapped dips at each of the corners, signage indicating where it was safe to park, including sufficient space so fire engines could access fire hydrants and the right to come in under the City's paving contract, using their leverage for lower prices when we needed to pave the service roads in the future. The City remained responsible for the maintenance of the public roads, the curbs and sidewalks. As many KMS townhomes have two people working and thus two cars and sometimes have older children in residence who drive and use cars to go to work or go to school there is a great need for parking. Thus, KMS residents need to park on the streets as well as the service roads.

After these improvements to our streets we continued to petition for permit parking because in addition to the local competition for parking between residents we also have people who work in BRAC or downtown DC would come and park on our streets and then take buses to their destinations so that they did not have to pay for parking at work. We have also had problems where truckers, including freight trucks would park their rigs on our streets. We also had people performing vehicle maintenance on the street which is illegal. We did get a permit parking program which allowed us to apply and pay for a hang tag for visitors, and people doing work on our homes. But we were recently told that this program has been discontinued. However, conversations with the new City Manager give us hope that perhaps the permit applications system would be reactivated.

The “Parking Wars” were not a lot of fun particularly because Dwight Dutton who at the time owned the rental properties then called Jamestowne Village now called Parkside ( they were turned into condos which could be bought by residents) also owned the parcel of land T&ES calls Polk Park. Dutton presented multiple proposals to the Planning Commission which were all vehemently opposed by local residents who felt that the slope was too steep, that such building would create yet another dense development and additional competition for parking because there was not sufficient parking included for the proposed townhouses. It was also stated that too many trees would be removed and this would create soil erosion and the run-off water which would impact the homes on the south side of Polk and in the single-family homes just below between Polk and Rickenbacker. What local residents wanted was to preserve the trees and greenspace. Residents also wanted this land to be used as a park.

If you look at Docket Item #12 for December 4, 2012 of the Planning Commission you will find the record of the transfer of the 2.4 acres of property at 5325 Polk was purchased for \$1.9 million of which \$1.5 million was received from DOD for the acquisition of open space land supplemented by \$0.4 million from the city’s CIP Open Space Fund. On page 4 of that document under Future Use of the Property the following was undictated as future improvements. Removal of a house foundation, improved trail access, park furnishing, including benches and a trashcan, as well as any need maintenance of the forested area. Costs were estimated at that time to be \$78,000 to \$170,000 and would require CIP funding and require the approval of the Parks and Recreation Commission and Department. To date such improvements have not been made. Local residents would very much like to have improvements made to the park to make it more usable.

A hole was punched in the fence between Parkside and Pelham allowing more people to park down on Pelham. Thus, the people on this street face competition for parking from residents both from the 399 units at Willow Run and the 379 units at Parkside. At the BSVCA zoom meeting on July 13, 2022 several people indicated that they were strongly opposed to eliminating the nine parking spaces. Ms. Carroll indicated that this was not possible and the removal of the parking spaces was necessary to accommodate the sidewalk. She also said that she had visited this street during daylight hours and found that there was plenty of parking. The visit was for about 20 minutes as I understand it. But the real crunch comes at night when people come home from work or school. And KMS residents can only park in the one space immediately in front of their homes or on the street. T&ES has not done a recent parking survey of the Parking on Pelham and Polk as is normally done when a permit parking program is indicated or where parking is contentious.

### **History of the Development of this Sidewalk Building Parking Place Taking Proposal and Guidelines and Goals for Federal and State Grant Programs to Promote Safe Streets**

This is the audit that was conducted and is listed on the T&ES website listing the history of the development of this sidewalk/parking proposal. It was part of a plan to make

other infrastructure improvements in and around the Polk School re signage, curb improvements, cutting of tree limbs and overgrown bushes, public outreach etc. I had asked how much each of these plan elements were budgeted for.

<https://media.alexandriava.gov/docs-archives/localmotion/info/alexandria-walkabout-power-point-template=revised=8=7=17.pdf>

Nationally the various different Safe Streets Grants have been used to improve transportation infrastructure, limit accidents and fatalities, to improve the safety of walking, bike riding and facilitate the ability of residents to take buses and mass transit. This is because many bike groups and other civic advocates urged Congress and the USDOT to include programs and funding for a variety of initiatives designed to:

- 1) Make street intersections safer and reduce accidents.
- 2) Promote the use of bikes to reduce pollution and increase health and wellness benefits by encouraging biking, walking and taking public transport to reduce the number of vehicles on the road thus reducing air pollution.
- 3) Promote equity and inclusion of benefits by encouraging programs which benefit low income residents, and minority residents which in the past have often been left out of initiatives to improve street safety and pedestrian safety because they lacked the political power to demand such improvements. The goal was to promote programs which helped these populations get to the places they needed and wanted to go such as schools, recreation centers, parks, work. Many of these residents rely on busses and mass transit to a greater degree than the general population so connections to these hubs was also important.

I have advocated for more money for mass transit including busses, circulator busses, biking, the expansion of bike racks in the West End, and increased opportunities for children to be able to walk and bike to school safely. I have advocated for more after school recreation activities both sports activities and arts enrichment programs. Enhancement of such enrichment programs are especially important for low income and minority students and equity promotion is one of the goals of the Safe Streets to School, and Safe Streets and Roads Grant Programs. Additionally, kids who have a place to go to play sports, learn to dance, participate in visual arts projects or get tutoring, are engaged, in a safe place. Their moms or grandparents may also be participating in a sport, yoga or dance class at the rec center. Studies show that kids that have such opportunities are less likely to hang out on the streets, get in trouble or get involved with guns.

Bikes are very expensive and the income of the average bike owner in Alexandria is over \$100,000 and most bikes can cost over \$1,000. I know about bike issues because my son worked his way thru school as a bike courier. Currently ACPS indicates that 83% of our students are eligible for free and reduced-price lunches. This means their families have very low incomes. For example, if you have one child to be eligible your income may not exceed \$13,590. The amount of income increases according to the family size. If you have 5 children your income eligibility is \$32,470. These families have difficulty

paying for food and rent and usually do not have sufficient income to purchase a bike. At Polk 78% of the 730 students enrolled at Polk are minority students but enrollment at the school (according to ACPS) has been dropping recently. This could be because housing is increasingly costly, and because people lost jobs or child care. Some family members may have died from Covid. All of these issues may have caused people to move. Some people have also taken their children out of school to send them to private and religious schools.

So, children, who might want to bike, probably cannot afford bikes, or helmets and other things they may need. I do think we have to focus on programs which would make bikes more affordable to lower income families. While there are a limited number of programs which rehabilitate donated bikes and provide them to lower income residents they are not enough to meet the need. Otherwise biking to school is only an option for children from wealthier families. I am mentioning all of this because I know that some members of the Parking Board are big supporters of biking. But right now most bikers are well to do. This does not fit the income equity goals encouraged by these grant programs. More needs to be done for low income students and residents.

Also needed are rules and regulations related to scooters as I expect they are going to become more popular. But not all such scooters are safe and we need rules and regulations to insure that they are safe and do not dump a child on the ground causing injury because of faulty scooter mechanisms ( recent articles in the press have indicated such problems with scooters) and ways to insure that they are properly and securely locked at schools. I do think that we have to look very carefully at all of these issues.

The question is what are our highest priorities in terms of helping children to go safely to school and residents to feel safe walking in their neighborhoods both day and night? What are our priorities in terms of improving access to Recreation Centers and after school programs and recreational facilities that children and residents use? How can we facilitate this? Personally, I think instead of using \$100,000 for this sidewalk I would rather spend about \$5,000 to pay for putting in the crosswalk and signs, and take the balance and put it into other key intersections and routes in the West End where we know that students and residents are walking to school and pedestrian travel is unsafe. To me these would be a far higher priority to provide safety both for local residents and children going to schools and recreations centers and to get to bus stops that serve them and commuters safely. Two areas in the West End stand out as locations where local residents are very interested in making improvements. One is the Intersection of Van Dorn and Richenbacker/Sanger others are intersections along Taney and further down Richenbacker closer to the Polk and Patrick Henry school and Rec center which the BSVCA President has been discussing with T&ES. Bob Garbatz discussed ways that these streets could be made safer with the Civic Association in a zoom call.

T&ES indicated that this sidewalk on Polk was necessary as part of their commitment to provide "complete streets." There was no huge local clamor by residents to do this. Rather it appears to be because this fits the Safe Streets template to put in sidewalks where they are missing. There are many places where sidewalks are missing that might be a higher priority in terms of the number of children and residents served.



Again, this is why we need updated surveys relating to how many children are going to use this route. Improving the intersections on Richenbacker and Van Dorn and Taney and would greatly enhance the ability for children to walk to school and provide safety for all residents and commuters. I would rather see these proposed funds used where residents have indicated problems and a need for transportation infrastructure improvement to improve safety.

Near where I live on Vail Street residents have expressed great interest in improving the intersection at Richenbacker and Van Dorn for a very long time and have brought these issues up with T&ES and elected representatives many times. The traffic on Van Dorn is posted at 35 MPH but many exceed this speed. There have been both accidents and many near miss accidents at this intersection. The light needs to be retimed to make it easier to make the turn from Richenbacker/Sanger on to Van Dorn going left up to Landmark Mall. When on Sanger which becomes Richenbacker at the intersection with Van Dorn visibility is very poor in both directions. The cross walk for people on the bus is difficult because of the poor timing of the light and the fact that there is very little space to stand while waiting to cross the road. The bus stop on the other side in front of the KMS Townhouses on that side of Van Dorn is also important. People end up getting off buses and walking home via the service road in front of KMS homes because the sidewalk has badly heaved. You will see commuters, children, women pushing strollers with babies and toddlers walking down the service road where cars may be driving and there is a sharp curve in the service road making this particularly dangerous. The visibility is very poor because the bushes and trees there have to be cut back to make it easier to see people, as cars come around the service road curve. Similarly, the bushes next to the bus stop need to be kept pruned and the limbs of the trees in this area need to be pruned so that they do not break and fall on pedestrians and or cars. Finally, there are many places where there is no sidewalk on the side of Van Dorn closest to 395. Note these improvements would not only help students attending the Polk School but also the students attending the Ramsey School and Rec Center on Sanger.

Again, I invite Members of the City Council, The Parking Board, the City Manager, and City Staff and the BSVCA membership to come and view these locations and discuss with residents their concerns and recommendations for improvements to transportations infrastructure to improve the safety of our school children and other residents.

Thank you for your attention and interest.

## Gloria Sitton

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**From:** Shirley's Comcast <shirley-downs@comcast.net>  
**Sent:** Thursday, September 15, 2022 10:34 AM  
**To:** Justin Wilson; canek Aguirre; Amy Jackson; Kirk McPike; Sarah Bagley; John Chapman; Alyia Gaskins; Gloria Sitton; Jim Parajon  
**Cc:** Shirley A Downs  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL]Polk Park petition to overturn the July decision of the Parking Commission, Saturday September 17, 2022, City Hall, Council Chambers. for City Council Members.  
**Attachments:** Questions for Council and Staff,Polk Park Parking Sept 17, 2022 City Council 2.docx; Ziemann Reply re Polk Park Questions.pdf; Questions for T&ES RE Polk Park grant Safe Schools .docx; SIDEWALKS in Alexandria (Mandatory Protocols) current for 2021-22.docx; To the Members of the Parking Board.docx

**Dear Mayor and City Council Members.**

This email will focus on **Environmental Issues:**

The big issue here is cutting into the toehold tree roots at the bottom of Polk Park. These roots both suck up water and hold the trees in place. Because the slope is so steep and the soil has both a lot of clay and gravel it is not a great kind of property to cut into. In my testimony to the Parking Commission July 25, 2022 I described in some length and detail problems local residents had with soil erosion, and water getting into our homes which made extensive repairs necessary in people's basements and in some cases people put in sump pumps, and french drains. Attached below is my testimony from July 25, to the Parking Commission in which I discuss these issues in detail. There are hyperlinks to discussions relating to the topography and the kind of soil we have.

Parks and Recreation, which hired people to analyze our soil and our topography to better maintain our parks and to inform developers, builders, and homeowners about the of the kinds of problems that could be anticipated in digging into this kind of landscape and it's potential consequences. The short story is that you can not cut too many tree roots because it will destabilize the slope and trees further up the slope are in danger of coming down. They in effect start to slide down the slope. This problem is aggravated by climate change in several ways. We now have more frequent and often more violent rain storms where a lot of rain falls very quickly and this is often accompanied by high winds . This can cause tree limbs to fall and for trees to even become uprooted. You have seen this sometimes on the news when they will show a street tree that became uprooted and fell over on someone's car or home. Well the same thing can happen in the green space that is our nice little park. Our very steep slopes make this a real problem. You have sometimes seen this in news reports as well especially re houses in LA where trees come down and even houses slide right down a steep hill especially after a drenching rain and high winds caused by the storms which are influenced by what is going on in the oceans. This is happening in both the West Coast and the East Coast. Such storms are causing major flooding because of storms that form in the Caribbean and the Atlantic Ocean.

So what to do.

When first proposed by T&ES they wanted to take down 9 trees. Parks and Recreation fought back against taking too many trees. They said that some trees could come down, but not too many, and not the biggest trees which are too valuable and are kind of keystone trees that are very much holding the slope in place while sucking up copious amounts of water and preventing runoff on to the road. Because of the nature of our soil, which has copious amounts of clay, a lot of the water runs right down the hill, across the road and into the yards and basements of the houses opposite the Park and on the hill below and into the single family homes below Polk Park. Vail Street, which has a much gentler slope, has had problems with flooding basements, the need to install sump pumps and french drains. A neighbor across the street spent \$15,000 on installing french drains to mitigate water coming into the basement. I will have to put them in my back yard, as well. If you look at my original testimony before the Parking Commission I outlined the drainage problems quite extensively.

This is why local residents fought so hard against the plans of the previous owner of Parkside, (previously known as JamestownVillage) rental properties before he turned them into condos. He also owned the land now called Polk Park. Mr. Dutton tried for several years to build townhouses or condos on the PolkPark site. Local residents said no: it is not a good site to build on because it is too steep; too many trees would come down; not enough parking, would be provided; we already have too many dense communities here with inadequate parking; it will exacerbate the parking problem which is already bad; and you will not be able to get a fire truck up there safely. Proposals to develop the site with housing were defeated at the Planning Commission several times. This failure led Dwight Dutton to sell the property when the city used the money the City got from DOD when the Defense Department leveled trees to build the BRAC Building. The money from DOD, together with funds from the city's Parks and Recreation Department and Dutton's ability to allow the donation of the land to create a conservation easement helped Mr. Dutton, sell the land for a profit and get a big tax write off via this conservation easement donation.

Local residents, including Kathy Burns, Shirley Downs and Carol James had worked to try to get this land for a park for years. The establishment of the park was supported by all of the Civic Associations in the West End, and all of the Townhouse Developments, Condo developments, and rental properties, units including, Parkside, KMS, Hollandtowne, Overlook, Seminary Towers, and Willow Run and all of the city leadership including the Mayor, City Council, the City Manager, the City Attorney, and the Planning, and Transportation Departments, ACPS, and the Department of Parks and Recreation. So we have a special pride and interest in this park because in fact it was community activists that caused it to be created.

We would very much like to have improvements made in the park so it could be better used by residents, school children, dog walkers, bird watchers, and people who just enjoy the

view. There were improvements recommended at the time the park was created by the Parks and Rec planners but they have not yet been acted on. We hope they will be in the future.

During the BSVCA Zoom Meeting and at the Parking Commission hearing several issues were raised by residents. These included:

1. Can you push the sidewalk further back into the park?
2. Can you eliminate more trees?
3. Can you mitigate the run off of water down the hill and into homes?
4. If the walk is not shoveled and the ice is not chipped and a person falls and sues the City what agency is responsible for paying for the liability insurance and any monetary judgment which may occur?
6. Did you consider the use of permeable pavers or other similar remedies both for a reconfigured path from the Parkside Gate to the proposed sidewalk, in a more gentle sloping fashion and for the sidewalk itself?
7. Did you consider a small curb or a slightly higher curb which would have weep holes in it to hold back the trees and provide drainage along this proposed sidewalk?
8. Do you provide lighting, maintenance in terms of shoveling the walk, chipping the ice, money to cut tree limbs that are about to fall, money to eradicate poison ivy in the park and along the back of the side walk?
9. Could the sidewalk be made more narrow to accommodate walkers and strollers,

The answer to these questions by Parks and Recreation Deputy Director Jack Browne were as follows:

1. No we can not push it further into the park.
2. No we have given up as many trees as we can. We need to keep the trees that remain to help keep the toe hold of roots intact to help stop the trees up higher from falling and sliding down the slope.
3. No we do not have the budget to put in permeable pavers or other remedies that might help this situation. However there were no cost estimates re these costs. Just statements that there was currently no budget to do them
4. There was no answer re liability insurance and who pays for a potential winning suit. You need to get this information.
5. Permeable pavers and mitigation such as redoing the path from the Parkside gate and gently slope the path to the right as you look at the gate from Polk into Parkside would cost more and currently Parks and Rec has no budget for this. If this is to be considered it would definitely cost more money, but the costs have not been estimated so we do not know how much.
6. See above answer.
7. Parks and Rec indicated they did not have funds for this. I do not know if they would consider this or not. It would probably depend on if it could be done without damaging a lot of tree roots which keep the toehold intact. There was no further discussion at the Parking Commission when this was brought up only that Parks and Rec had no funding to do this.

8. Parks and Rec indicated that they do not have money in the budget for lighting, shoveling snow, chipping ice, They also have no maintenance staff who cut tree limbs, or do poison ivy eradication. These are all contracted out.

9. Could the sidewalk be made more narrow to allow walkers and baby carriages and still remain on the right away.

I do not know if the street can be narrowed completely to bring the sidewalk and cars out further into the roadbed and if so how much? Narrowing the street for 9 parking spaces would definitely slow traffic. The resident who owns the house directly across from Polk Park wants to keep all the night-time parking spaces, and has recommended that the sidewalk be pushed into the park and that there be a raised wall with some weep holes. He owns a real estate company that sells Condos in Parkside and townhomes and single family homes and has trucks that hold furniture that he and his wife, who operates a real estate firm that sell condos and homes in the neighborhood. He made a proposal to Ms. Carroll just before the hearing in July which she did not acknowledge or discuss in the written record. I do not know if there were further private conversations with T&ES on this proposal.

So it remains to be seen if any of these issues could be explored further as potential negotiated solutions to the dilemma or if on further consideration they would be considered too expensive. Those discussions and negotiations have not been fully explored.

**Regarding an Accurate Audit of Children Going to the Polk School it appears we need more time to get data from both the Polk School and Parkside.**

**In conclusion, I believe the best solutions would be not to build the sidewalk for \$100,000 and instead do the more cost effective \$5,000 crosswalk and put in signs to slow traffic and signage to indicate where to walk safely at the middle of the block which we recommended earlier. Money could instead be put into other projects that would help children walking to Polk by fixing the intersection at Richenbacher and Pegram with striped cross walks, and slow signs and cutting bushes and tree limbs to make children and adults more visible. Figure out better ways to slow the traffic such as those Bob Garbacz, of T&ES, described to BSVCA members in an earlier zoom call. Because it appears that this is where the most pedestrian traffic is for children walking to Polk School. We know that about 95% of the children walk along Richenbacher and then turn up Pegram and then turn right at Polk to get to Polk School.**

**These estimates are based on reports from residents taking their kids to school and from teachers and other observers at the Polk School. If you want specific hard data, place counters at Richenbacher and Pegram and on the site of the proposed sidewalk on Polk aimed at the Gate where children and adults come through from Parkside down to Polk Street. These actions would provide reliable data as to where children and adults are walking. This could be combined with information from Polk School re. how many children are coming by bus, and car and what the enrollment is at Polk?**

**This would provide clearer Walk Space information related to children going to Polk School. If we want to make the best use of tax dollars it is necessary to get accurate, reliable data that everyone is comfortable with. According to the criteria for Neighborhood Sidewalk Applications:**

- At least 51% of residents need to be in support of the project. We have 152 neighbors who support our petition re this sidewalk, the Proposed Night-time Parking Survey and Enforcement of Parking in District 12,12A**
- There are concerns about the speed and volume of traffic along Richenbacher and Pegram which seem to be greater than the area in front of Polk Park.**
- There is no proximity to transit at the Polk sidewalk area**
- Will the cost feasibility of the design be prohibitive? We do not yet know.**
- There are large trees and excessive slopes, both indications that perhaps a sidewalk should not go in at the Polk site according to the city's Criteria for Priorities for building Neighborhood Sidewalks.**

**Regarding the Environmental Issues I think we could get some estimates re costs if the vote on the elimination of the 9 parking spaces was deferred until further consultations take place.**

**So there are indications that more time is needed both to collect Accurate updated data on the numbers of students from Parkside attending Polk and deliberations and cost estimates re the costs related to addressing the challenges of putting in the sidewalk at Polk and loosing the 9 Parking Spaces which are also needed by the neighborhood. We need to balance the different needs of residents.**

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**Testimony to the Parking Commission July 25, 2022**

**Thank you for your consideration and attention.**

**Sincerely,**

**Shirley Downs**

**1007 north Vail Street**

**Alexandria, VA 22304**

**Phone: 703-845-7958 Land Line no text**

**Email: [shirley-Downs@comcast.net](mailto:shirley-Downs@comcast.net)- Best way to reach me**

# Before Submitting a Neighborhood Sidewalk Application

## REVIEW THE ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Before submitting a petition for a sidewalk on your street, be sure it meets the eligibility criteria listed below.

- The street may not already be on the list of priority sidewalk projects from the Bicycle & Pedestrian Master Plan.

It's important to think about where you would like to have the sidewalk built. Here are some general considerations for locating and assessing conditions for a new sidewalk:

- New sidewalks must either connect to existing sidewalks or end at a cross-street. A new sidewalk cannot end in the middle of a block.
- Look closely at the area where you want to have new sidewalk built. **If you have any of the following impediments, sidewalk construction might not be feasible given available funding:**
  - **Large trees or robust landscaping**
  - **Excessive slopes**
  - Fences, walls, stairs
  - Poles, hydrants
- Sidewalks are constructed and assessed on a street-by-street basis. Sidewalks generally cannot be petitioned for a whole neighborhood; each street must be petitioned individually.

## Submitting a Neighborhood Sidewalk Application

Once you have read the information above and determined that a Neighborhood Sidewalk Petition is the appropriate course of action, [click here](#) to access the application. The application process is outlined below:

1. Sidewalk applications are evaluated annually. Applications are due by December 31 and will be evaluated in January. Applications that are approved will then be incorporated into the work plan for the upcoming fiscal year.
2. Submit your application. Applications **must include signatures from neighbors indicating whether or not they would support the project. Of these signatures, 51% of residents in the project area must indicate support for the project.** By submitting the application, you agree to be the Project Champion and accept responsibility for any additional neighborhood outreach.
  1. Note: for multifamily housing, the Project Champion should collect a signature from the property manager.
3. Sidewalk projects will be prioritized **Sidewalk projects will be prioritized based on a variety of considerations**, including, but not limited to:
  1. Proximity to schools, parks, or community centers
  2. Proximity to transit
  3. Proximity to other key pedestrian generators, such as retail or employment
  4. Presence of a sidewalk on one side of the street (preference is generally given to streets with no sidewalks on either side)

5. **Speed and volume of traffic along route**
  6. Network connectivity (i.e. would the new sidewalk make new pedestrian connections and allow people to reach nearby destinations more easily?)
  7. Cost and feasibility of design and installation
  8. **Neighborhood support for project**
4. If your project is selected, the Project Champion must notify all households adjacent to the proposed sidewalk of the project. City staff will provide outreach support by creating an informational flyer for the Project Champion to share with neighbors.
  5. Design and construction times can vary depending on a variety of factors, such as design complexities, crew availability, and weather conditions.

<https://www.alexandriava.gov/transportation-planning/neighborhood-sidewalk-program>

My question to the City Council Members and Staff is if this is the policy that the City and Staff developed and approved to prioritize where sidewalks should be put why should the approach not be followed in this case re the sidewalk for Polk in front of the park?

Whether we use city funds, or state VDOT funds as originally proposed, or Federal funds as in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Plan which recently passed Congress, the same rules and priorities should be applied. It appears that they were not. I very much approve of OPM eg my term for Other Peoples Money that is Local State Federal Grants, Foundation Grants and Business contributions for such projects.

Those plans are best developed when community people, all the local departments of the city government, advocacy groups such as the NAACP, the ACLU, advocacy groups such as CASA, and Tenants United, Church Groups, local business such as the West End Business Association and the business like Jack Taylor or our other local Car Dealers and restaurants get into the act and help to plan things together.

In fact similar sentiments came up last Saturday September 10, 2022 during a Listening Session at Beatley Library on School Safety The school kids indicated that local businesses had to be involved to help to solve the problem of school safety. Local residents also erupted at that session in frustration at being excluded from the policy making and priority setting part of the process. So frustrations with our civic culture and process came up there as well. I am not making this up, both Canek Aguirre and the School Board Member Abdel Elnoubi, listened to kids and community people voice their frustration about the fact that the School Superintendent had hand picked who was to be a member of the School Policy Group which would address school safety issues. Students felt that they should be on the policy committee because they were knowledgeable about the issues. In particular the immigrant groups who did not speak English were especially upset because they always feel left out of these discussions which profoundly impact them. Canek and School Board Member Abdel Elnoubi indicated that they had tried to make the group much bigger with more diverse representation but could not get enough votes to secure a larger policy group. I mention this because local residents do often feel left out of policy making discussions and decisions.

People from KMS felt left out when they never received notice about the policy to remove 9 parking spaces to build the sidewalk even though it would have profound impact on them and their ability to park. There was no notice, signs did not go up on Lamp Posts, or Telephone Poles, there were no press releases, or social media notices that I am aware of. This is an issue of informing the neighborhood and transparency re the City's policy making process.

I am sending this to you so that you can read it and act on it as soon as possible. Attached below are my history of the KMS parking saga, and a list of questions that I prepared for City Council Members together with a copy of my previous testimony at the Parking Board July 25, 2022 and my questions to T&ES and their reply..



I will prepare a summation of the **Environmental Issues** impacting any decision related to pushing the sidewalk further into Polk Park to provide more parking in another email.

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I hope this is of some use to you as you consider these issues.

Sincerely,

Shirley Downs  
1007 North Vail Street  
Alexandria, VA 22304  
Phone: 703-845-7958  
Email: [Shirley-Downs@comcast.net](mailto:Shirley-Downs@comcast.net)

## Questions for Members of the City Council to ask City Staff re Removal of 9 Parking Spaces in Front of Polk Park, City Council Hearing Saturday September 17, 2022

From: Shirley Downs

1007 North Vail Street

Alexandria, VA 22304

Phone: 703-845-7958 Landline no text

Email: [Shirley-Downs@Comcast.net](mailto:Shirley-Downs@Comcast.net) Best way to reach

### I. History

In my testimony which I submitted to the Parking Commission for the July 25<sup>th</sup> Parking Board Hearing which I sent to you at that time I outlined, in considerable detail how the residents of the KMS Townhouses and adjacent single family homes fought for over 22 and a half years to ensure that we would be able to have a night time parking district because parking has always been so difficult and challenging in our neighborhood. This included multiple petitions to the Parking Commission which originally said we could not have the kind of Parking District they had in Old Town and Del Ray because they were dealing with commercial parking concerns. We persisted and had many many contentious meetings with all of the elected officials and the Staff of the Departments of Planning and Transportation and Environmental services as well as the City Attorney and the City Manager.

We kept coming back and would not go away because our parking problems persisted. It took a long time **but we persisted.**

A. We secured the right to exclusively park in the Access Road/driveway directly in front of our homes by making a deal with the City involving all of the elected officials and all of the city staff mentioned above by "Vacating the Right of Way" there. All of the elected officials, City Manager, City Staff. City Attorney, and the Departments of Planning and Transportation and the owners of Willow Run supported this effort, as did many of our other townhome and single-family home residents.

1. Pave both the street and the access/driveway and allow us the right to use the leverage of the city contract when we had to pave it ourselves in the future.
2. That the city would remain responsible for the maintenance of the sidewalks, curbs, and the medians where grass and the trees were planted.
3. That residents were responsible for posting signs indicating where parking should not occur e.g. in front of handicapped dips, at curves, and next to fire hydrants as well as directly in front of our homes.

4. The City installed the handicapped dips and signs in front of the homes where handicapped residents resided throughout KMS.

**B.** Subsequently during the discussions over BRAC and continued concerns by residents that we still had extreme difficulty finding parking we battled on with the city until ***we secured a nighttime parking district in our neighborhood, this is in District 12 and 12 A. Again, all Council Members and related City Staff and the City Manager cited above supported this effort.***

C. We were also active in the efforts in securing the land that is now Polk Park. This was supported by KMS residents, BSVCA, Parkside, and all of the Civic Associations in the West End as well as all the City Council Members, City Manager, City Attorney, and the Staff of Planning, Parks and Rec, and T&ES.

## II. Current Issues

A. Residents asked for a public meeting with T&ES related to the issue of the sidewalk and parking spaces and asked for an honest discussion of possible alternatives. We also had the City Manager and several members of the Council to visit the site and made a suggestions re preserving the trees, and the parking spaces and placing appropriate signs to a) slow traffic and b) install a stripped crosswalk about mid -block to guide children and adults across from the North to the South side of Polk so children could go to Polk School which is on the South side.

**B. City Staff never scheduled a Public Meeting.** Instead they scheduled a “Listening Session” with the BSVCA. Such meetings do not require official minutes. Also, in spite of the fact that members of the BSVCA subcommittee which was dealing with 5325 Polk sent in comments these were not made part of the T&ES public Record on their website. So, no resident going to the website would know that any other alternatives had been proposed. The absence of a Public Meeting, with minutes and attendance lacks transparency and violates government in the sunshine laws.

### C. Questions for Staff

1. *Ask Staff what is the cost benefit of spending \$100,000 on a sidewalk vs \$5,000 on a striped crosswalk and some signs indicating slow down and other signs indicating where to walk?*

I also believe in Smart Growth and having sidewalks for pedestrians but **there should be a balance**. I think the need for parking in this neighborhood outweighs putting in a sidewalk that would remove 9 parking spaces. Especially when there is a reasonable solution that would keep children and pedestrians safe. Children have to be on the South side of Polk to get to Polk school. This solution would allow them to do so safely. An audit of the School Children and adults using the proposed sidewalk has not been done. Why not?

2. *Why didn't Staff schedule a Public Hearing and why didn't the suggestions from the community and the concerns expressed by the community ever make it on to the website?*
3. *Why did you choose a listening session which does not require the recording of resident's questions concerns and suggestions? Since this was the only public community discussion why wasn't this publicized by a press release, signs in the community, on social media etc. ?*
4. *Why didn't Staff indicate that during the Listening Session with the BSVCA that:*
  - a. **All residents** on the Zoom Meeting with the BSVCA both those that supported the sidewalk and those that didn't were **opposed to eliminating ANY of the 9 PARKING SPACES.**
  - b. That **ALL** residents were concerned with **NIGHTTIME PARKING SPACES.** Ms. Alexandria Carroll the Safe Streets T&ES Staff Person was concerned about daytime parking and during her 20-minute visit during the day stated that there were 50 parking spaces. Everyone stated that the problem was not during the day but at night.
  - c. Residents on the zoom meeting call indicated that while people on Pelham, Polk, Palmer Place and some of the residents below Polk received letters from T&ES asking for their views related to the proposed sidewalk and loss of parking spaces no one else had. **Residents from KMS along Van Dorn, Vail, Terrill, and Richenbacher, who are profoundly impacted by taking away these spaces RECEIVED NO NOTICE THAT THIS WAS PLANNED. THEY NEVER RECEIVED ANY LETTERS OR NOTICE ABOUT THIS PROPOSAL.** That is one of the reasons why 155 people signed our petition asking you to overturn this decision by the Parking Commission.
5. *Ask Staff why they did not realize that if the 9 parking spaces were eliminated that it would so severely impact our nighttime parking situation that*

*it would in effect break the agreement between Elected Officials, Staff, the City Manager and residents to insure that there was a **maximum amount of night-time parking in this area from Van Dorn, Vail, Terrill, Richenbacher, Pelham, Polk and the single family homes below Polk that we worked so hard for so many years to secure?** TAKING THESE 9 PARKING SPACES IS A SNEEKY WAY FOR T&ES TO TRY TO OVERTURN THE PERMIT PARKING DISTRICT AGREEMENT WON BY RESIDENTS WITH THE APPROVAL OF DISTRICT 12 AND 12A. THIS AGREEMENT FOR A NIGHTTIME PERMIT PARKING DISTRICT WAS AGREED TO BY THE ELECTED OFFICIALS, PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION, THE CITY MANAGER AND ALL OTHER RELEVANT CITY STAFF.*

Note there had been no press releases, social media announcements or public signs around the neighborhood announcing that this change was being proposed and discussed. *So, no one who would be so severely impacted by this proposal knew anything about it!!! **Residents see these issues as interrelated.*** The loss of **ANY parking spaces has a profound impact on the ability of the residents of Van Dorn, Vail, Terrill, Pelham and Polk and the single-family homes below Polk to find parking at night.** It is so tight that after 9 PM there are virtually no parking spaces because when people cannot find parking on their own street they continue driving and looking until they find one. That takes at least 20 minutes. If you work late, go to school at night, go out shopping for food items, go on a date, or are attending a night time meeting or community event you will have trouble finding parking. Note this is not only a problem for KMS residents and single-family homeowners but also the residents of the rental property Willow Run. So, if you take away **any of the 9 Parking Spaces** it will be significantly worse for everyone. **Constituents will notice and there will be political consequences. Parking is the third rail in City quality of life issues.**

6. Ask Staff why the potential sources of funding for this project kept changing?
7. Ask Staff which is it? Why did the answer re the funding for the project keep changing?

8. *Ask staff since this project is now being done with city funds will the city rules related to the selection of and prioritization of sidewalk projects apply?*

First, we were told that the funding would come from the VDOT Safe Streets to Schools program, then we were told that no there was a bigger pot of money at the federal level that they were applying for under the recently passed Bipartisan Infrastructure bill. Then when I asked questions about funding resources in the “Listening Session” and in a list of Questions that I submitted to Ms. Carroll and her boss Chris Ziemann We were then told by Ziemann that the \$100,000 in funding for the proposed sidewalk would actually come from City funds.

9. *Ask staff since this project is now being done with City funds will the rules related to the selection of and prioritization of sidewalk projects apply?*

The rules listed re prioritization of sidewalk projects are attached at the end of this document.

10. *Ask Staff why they would ignore these criteria?*

11. *Ask Staff why wouldn't these priorities apply to this proposed sidewalk project no mater what source of funding either local, state or federal grant apply? Presumably these criteria were developed by some appointed commission or task force of local residents? **So, if they do not apply you are in effect not respecting the recommendations of local residents re prioritizing local sidewalk projects and the rules adopted by your own Staff and City elected officials.***

12. *Ask Staff why they would ignore these criteria and recommendations?*

13. *Ask staff why they are not collecting data about the number of children using this sidewalk to go to school? Why did they turn down the offer by the survey company they hired to collect data on the number of people both children and adults potentially using this sidewalk? During the presentation by T&ES at the BSVCA “Listening Session” Ms. Carroll showed graphics of the project which was called Safe Streets For All and was originally VDOT money. The graphics showed that a survey of the children using this sidewalk would be coming from Pelham, Polk and Parkside who would be using this sidewalk to walk to Polk School. I asked if they had updated the data because it was seriously out of date. Grants be they federal, state or foundations were very competitive and they would need updated data. It stated right on the graphic that they needed to update the school walk space data before submitting it.*

14. *Ask Staff why they switched the purpose from helping kids going to school to providing a sidewalk for adults and the general public? Why did they not use such*

*funds from the Metropolitan Council to finish the audit of the children who would use the sidewalk to get to Polk? After I raised this question, they switched from talking about children using it to adults using it. When the response from Mr. Christopher Ziemann came back., he stated that they were using the grant that they got from the Metropolitan Council of Governments, to conduct Safe Routes to School Audits at the remaining school districts. **Why did they drop Polk from the list of priority projects?***

**15. Ask Staff *why they would choose not to include securing updated information for the number of people using this proposed sidewalk using these funds for Safe Walk to Schools Audits and/or the counter at the gate between Polk and Parkside which the contractor they contracted with to do a daytime audit, suggested?***

**16. Ask staff *how much the daytime parking survey she commissioned cost? Why she did not act on the suggestions by the people conducting the survey to amend the contract to collect information re parking on Richenbacher and other streets and why she turned down their offer to place a data collector at the entrance of the gate from Parkside to Polk to determine how many children and adults were using this area for the proposed sidewalk to walk to Polk or Hamond schools? He proposed this as an amendment to the contract but was turned down? Why?*** Could it be because not that many people, both children and adults would be using it? During the Zoom Meeting residents indicated only 2 children lived on Pellham and 2 on Polk. So, the balance of the children walking to school would come from Parkside.

**17. Ask staff *why they were doing a daytime parking survey when ALL local residents had stated that the problem was with night time parking? That is when the survey should be done. Otherwise it is wasting taxpayer dollars. The one useful thing would have been counting the children and adults using this area to walk. MS Carroll specifically rejected this suggestion. Why? It would have been the only useful thing from a daytime parking survey.***

**18. Ask Staff *why***

**19. *Parking is not being enforced in Parking District 12 and 12 A?***  
*At the Hearing at the Parking Commission we learned from the Vice Chair of the Parking Commission that of the 12 Parking Districts in the City ( there are 14 now because 2 more parking districts have been added) only District 12, 12A did not have*

*any parking enforcement. All of the other parking districts had enforcement. This is discrimination against us and our Parking District and is why we asked for overturning the Parking Boards decision and the enforcement of parking in our area, District 12,12A and for a night time parking survey to be done. That is what the 155 people who signed our petition asked you to do.*

- 20.** *Ask Staff why there is no additional funding in the budget for lighting, snow and ice removal, , the cutting of tree limbs, and park maintenance issues such as removal of poison ivy? During the session with the BSVCA and during the Parking Commission hearing Jack Broward of Parks and Recreation indicated that they had no money in the budget for lighting, removal of snow and ice, or the ability to put in things like permeable pavers which might allow the tree roots to suck up more water and top water from running over the sidewalk and down the sidewalk and street and across to the homes across and below the park. He also said that they had no additional funding to build a retaining wall next to the sidewalk.*

Basically, I think that T&ES decided that this project was less expensive than another situation where they were being asked to consider putting in a sidewalk where none currently is because it was relatively short and could be done less expensively. In other words, it was a way to record a “win” according to the Smart Growth Safe Streets bible. They want to do this while sticking Parks and Recreation with the cost of maintenance and all other costs. Parks and Rec does not have as much clout with the city administration as other departments like ACPS, Planning and Transportation and Environmental services. So, they lose during budget time, even though the public often indicates that they would like more money to go to Parks and Recreation because they greatly value the parks, the arts, and the sports and other programs such as dance and yoga offered by Parks and Rec.

- 21.** *Ask Staff if someone slips and falls on the snow and ice of this sidewalk does the City have liability insurance? What department has to pay for the insurance and what departmental budget has to pay if the City gets sued for injuries from slipping on the snow and ice?*
- 22.** *Ask Staff if they considered using permeable pavers and a reconfiguration of the steep path from Parkside to Polk Street as a way to make it easier for residents as well as suck up more water and runoff and ensure that the toe hold of the tree roots stays intact? If not why not?*



- 23.** *Ask Staff about the discussion relating to cutting into the tree roots on the stability of the trees above the sidewalk and the stability of the slope and the potential for more trees to fall further up the slope?*

During the BSVCA meeting and the Parking Commission hearing **when people asked if it was possible to cut further into the roots of the trees to save the 9 parking places. Parks and Rec said no.** Originally 9 trees were to be removed, now 5 will be removed but they will still keep the toehold of roots. If the sidewalk was pushed further into the park it would result in trees coming down further up the slope and damage the structural integrity of the slope so that more trees would come down further up the hill. This is because of the nature of the soil and the steepness of the slope. (It is also one of the reasons the community opposed further development on the Polk site when Dwight Dutton, the previous owner of Parkside and the area known as Polk Park proposed additional condos/townhouses for this site. He tried to get the Planning Commission to approve this several times and it was always defeated.)

Also, with climate change we are getting more storms with more rain coming down rapidly and more high wind which causes trees to uproot and tree branches coming down. This happened recently and branches came down right where the sidewalk is proposed to be.

- 24.** *Ask staff if this sidewalk project was approved in a previous budget or if this is a new project?*

**Transparency and local input by residents is not part of the City of Alexandria's Civic Culture and it is the reason why people often say Staff and the City Manager and the Council are not listening and do not care what their concerns and priorities are.** The Staff stacks the deck using the Budget Process and Commissions.

This is why at various times local residents ***explode*** as they did over Council having a secret vote to approve DOD building the BRAC Building, Another example was TE&T Staff 's insistence on putting Bike Lanes all along Seminary Road even though local residents were opposed. The blow back from that was that ***ALL*** of the Civic Associations in the City opposed these plans. Staff forced it through in the teeth of a great deal of public opposition and there were many angry constituents and tense meetings. As a result, the Council approved this process which you are participating in on September 17, 2022 via the City Council Hearing which is reviewing the actions of the Parking Commission. A further result was with BRAC and the Seminary Road Blow Back was that there was considerable turnover in City Council Seats. This could well happen again if residents feel that they are not supported by City Council Members re the Parking 9 Parking Spaces at Polk. ***So, this is a very***

***consequential vote which will be watched by constituents!!!***

**D. THE PARKING COMMISSION VOTED AGAINST THE PROVISION OF KEEPING THE 9 PARKING SPACES. WHY? CONTRIBUTING FACTORS:**

1. The Parking Commission is programed by staff to vote the way Staff dictates,
2. The Parking Commission is larded with members who are bikers and devotes of Smart Growth and the Safe Streets Policy approach.
3. Several Parking Commissioners were brand new and thus were not about to buck Staff.
4. Two members of the Commission drove by the site but did not talk to any residents. The others did not bother or know anything about the issue except what they were told by Staff. One, the Chair, came and spoke to residents and we thought he agreed with the recommendation's residents suggested re doing a striped crosswalk for \$5,000, signage to slow the traffic, signs to indicate where to cross and investing the balance of the \$100,000 proposed to be spent on the projects elsewhere. We thought these were reasonable, cost effective, suggestions and that he and the City Manager were persuaded by these arguments. We were wrong. The Chair ended up not supporting us. He saw that other people were not going to vote with him. Probably because they were not very familiar with the site and the parking problems. We hope the City Manager does share our views.
5. The City provided no publicity or press releases or public signs or put up or notices on the light poles or telephone poles indicating what was going to happen to the neighborhood re the elimination of 9 parking spaces at Polk. Normally these are put up way ahead of time. So, most residents were completely unaware of the impact of this hearing and decision re the removal of the 9 Parking Spaces and the impact on the search for parking each night.
6. There was also no effort to communicate with those impacted. In addition to the people from KMS, Parkside, and the local single-family homes and the residents from Holandtowne townhouses the other people who will be greatly impacted are the residents who rent at Willow Run. They will be profoundly impacted by the loss of parking spaces. But because many are immigrants, whose first language is not English, they know little or nothing about the potential loss of parking. So, they did not show up at the Parking Commission on July 25, 2022. Nor do I expect them to show up on Saturday Sept 17<sup>th</sup> for the same reason. There was no posting of information, no translation into Spanish about what is proposed and its impact on them. I did try to speak to a few people from Willow to alert them but I got two answers. " I do not speak good English" and "No I do not like to complain." Many

come from countries where the government has jailed people, persecuted them and even killed them so they have a strong inclination not to trust local government.

**From:** Christopher Ziemann christopher.ziemann@alexandriava.gov  
**Subject:** RE: [EXTERNAL]Follow up Questions after BSVCA Meeting with T&ES re the Grant Application to VDOT for funds for the Polk project  
**Date:** July 22, 2022 at 2:36 PM  
**To:** Shirley's Comcast shirley-downs@comcast.net, Alexandria Carroll Alexandria.Carroll@alexandriava.gov



Hello Ms. Downs,

Thank you for emailing and I apologize for the delay in responding. As you can imagine we are very busy even though it's summer with traffic safety projects across the City. In reading your credentials, it's great to have someone so experienced with grant applications in the community who is willing to offer suggestions. It's also helpful to know there is support for traffic safety in the community as we are working hard to reach the goal of eliminating traffic-related deaths and serious injuries by 2028.

In reading your letter, you refer to "Safe Streets to Schools Grants," and I wanted to clarify this. The City is applying for the federal "Safe Streets for All" grant to fund further safety recommendations from the Safe Routes to School audits from 2017. These have not been specifically defined yet, but they will be more expensive infrastructure projects that haven't been done in house yet (such as sidewalks, moving curbs, etc.). In addition, the City was just awarded the Transportation and Land Use grant from the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments to conduct Safe Routes to School audits at the remaining school locations. To be clear, the Polk Ave Sidewalk project is being funded with local capital funds, so there is no application to include additional projects. That being said, we look forward to working with the community to address other safety issues like the ones you've brought up.

In terms of your questions regarding data on school children and school populations. This would be nice data to have, however would require a lot of staff resources that could be spent addressing the other safety issues like the ones you bring up. I know that you have very real concerns about the Polk Avenue park and staff is working to address them to the best of our abilities. City Council has directed us to prioritize safety for all users, which is why we are working to maximize safety for all residents while also reducing impacts.

Thank you again for your interest and your questions, and even though we disagree with the merits of this sidewalk project, I'm glad to know that we agree on the importance of traffic safety in general.

Best regards,

Christopher Ziemann, AICP (*he/him/his*)  
Division Chief, Transportation Planning  
Department of Transportation & Environmental Services  
City of Alexandria  
Office: 703.746.4083  
Mobile: 703.819.7082  
[christopher.ziemann@alexandriava.gov](mailto:christopher.ziemann@alexandriava.gov)

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**From:** Shirley's Comcast <[shirley-downs@comcast.net](mailto:shirley-downs@comcast.net)>  
**Sent:** Monday, July 18, 2022 11:08 AM

**To:** Alexandria Carroll <Alexandria.Carroll@alexandriava.gov>; Christopher Ziemann <christopher.ziemann@alexandriava.gov>  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL]Follow up Questions after BSVCA Meeting with T&ES re the Grant Application to VDOT for funds for the Polk project

You don't often get email from [shirley-downs@comcast.net](mailto:shirley-downs@comcast.net). [Learn why this is important](#)

Hello,

My name is Shirley Downs and I have some additional questions re the application for funding. It would be very helpful to be able to talk to you as soon as possible. I am also preparing additional information relating to the Park at Polk, These include, parking problems within the KMS Townhomes, Parkside, the Willow Run rental properties to the south along Richenbacker, and the other surrounding communities to the North and the single family residences in this area. My additional comments will relate to the very real problems that local residents have had with water damage to their homes and properties caused by the sloping natures of the land in this area and the quality and characteristics of the clay soil. All of these issues are very relevant to this project. Finally I will provide information related to greenspace and the trees in the Polk Park.

Because local budgets are tight I know that Alexandria is seeking funding where ever it can be found to address the needs of our residents. As it happens during my career I worked to secure local, federal, state and foundation funding when I worked for both a rural and NYC Congressional Representatives. Additionally when I lived in the NYS capital I was also intimately involved in interagency reviews of applications for state grant funding for a wide variety of programs and initiatives. So I am very aware of what it takes to prepare grant proposals and the kind of criteria the states employ when awarding competitive grants. I would be interested in speaking to appropriate T&ES staff to see if I might make some helpful suggestions in the preparation of applications to secure state and federal funding.

Thank you I look forward to speaking to you about these issues.

Shirley Downs  
1007 North Vail Street  
Alexandria, VA 22304  
Phone: 703-845-7958 Land Line no text.  
Email: [shirley-downs@comcast.net](mailto:shirley-downs@comcast.net)

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**To the Members of the Parking Board, Mayor and City Council,  
City Manager, and Members of Transportation and  
Environmental Services Department**

**Re: Parking Board Hearing on July 25, 2022, 7 PM**

The Polk Park Proposal, Item 9 on the Docket

Those wishing to submit testimony to the Members of the Parking Board should submit written comments by 7 PM Sunday July 24<sup>th</sup>, 2022 to [alex.block@alexandriava.gov](mailto:alex.block@alexandriava.gov). He can also arrange for those who wish to testify in person at the hearing to be able to do so by contacting him at this email address. Testimony is presented in the order that requests to testify are submitted. Mr. Block's Mobil phone is: 571-289-9135, his desk phone is: 703:746-4086. Try to get your testimony to him as early as possible so it can be shared with the Members of the Parking Board. EG 24 hours ahead of time.

From: Shirley Downs  
1007 North Vail Street  
Alexandria, VA 22304  
Phone: 703-845-7958 Land Line, No Text  
Email: Shirley-Downs@comcast.net

I hope that the Members of the Parking Board will have a chance to come and look at the site at 5325 Polk prior to reviewing this proposal on Monday to give you a better understanding of the site and the impact of this proposed sidewalk. I have been told that this testimony is too long but I wanted to give you an understanding of the history of parking issues and planning and transportation issues in this area. While Parking Board Members, City Council Members and T&ES staff may change many residents stay the same. We have the historical memory of these many policy issues which impact our community.

I wish to express my opposition to the Department of Transportation and Environmental Services recommendation to put in a sidewalk at 5325 Polk at the front of what T&ES refers to as Polk Park at a cost of \$100,000 dollars. This proposal would remove 9 parking spaces on the North side of Polk, and require 5 trees to be removed to accommodate the installation of a new sidewalk in front of Polk Park. I am only opposed to putting in a sidewalk that would remove 9 parking spaces and 5 trees at 3535 Polk. I also think it should be possible to put in a crosswalk between the North side of Polk and the South side of Polk either at the corner or somewhere in the middle of the block. This would cost about \$5,000. Please note that children going to Polk have to cross the block anyway to get to the Polk School which is on the South side of Polk.

Removal of the trees will also increase the likelihood of slope failure and collapse. This information comes from Anthony Fleming who was commissioned by the City of Alexandria to do an analysis of the soil and topography conditions in our city which is contained in the Geologic Atlas of the City of Alexandria. This is used by the city to provide information about soil, water, and environmental issues that can have an impact on infrastructure projects. This kind of information was used by opponents when

developers were trying to build townhouses on this slope. Below is the link to the document which Anthony Fleming prepared for the City describing the composition of the soil and topography. You can look at the color coded map and see what kind of land our homes and the park are built upon.

<https://media.alexandriava.gov/docs-archives/recreation/parks/plate=4=potomac=formation=map.pdf>

This section describes the Potomac Formation which is the history of how Alexandria's geography was formed starting in the Cretaceous period, and how and why our soil behaves as it does.

<https://media.alexandriava.gov/docs-archives/recreation/parks/plate=4=potomac=formation=expanded=explanation.pdf>

When asked about the lack of any maintenance plan for this sidewalk Jack Broward, of Parks and Recreation, indicated there were no funds in this Grant dedicated to snow and ice removal or lighting on this piece of proposed sidewalk in this project or in his department's budget. What happens if someone slips and falls on ice and sues the city on this sidewalk in front of a city owned property? Money needs to be provided for maintenance to Parks and Recreation if there is a sidewalk in front of a public park.

Note homeowners shovel the sidewalks in front of their KMS homes. This involves, shoveling snow, chipping ice, putting down snow melt, and relying on city street lights to provide lighting for pedestrian safety.

One of the reasons I am opposed to the removal of the trees to build the sidewalk is that the roots of trees and bushes help to suck up water and stabilize soil on steep slopes. Because of climate change we have had extreme swings in our weather with storms that dump large amounts of rain over short periods, and high winds that take down tree limbs and even upend trees when their roots fail. This is particularly a problem because our clay soil does not percolate well and water tends to run down the hill.

KMS residents know all about this problem. We have steep grades but they are nothing like the very steep grade at 5325 Polk. On my side of Vail Street heavy rains have sometimes caused basement recreation rooms to flood necessitating the replacement of wall board, and carpet at great expense. Two owners had to install sump pumps. Other residents had to install French drains to channel water away from the basement patio doors to keep water out of their basements. The owners of one home spent \$15,00 on French drains. I have drainage problems in both my front and back yards. Two different landscape designers said it would cost thousands of dollars to put in French drains in the back of the house and to put replacement trees and bushes in the front yard to help to retain the soil. Because of covid I kept people away and have delayed these construction projects.

At a zoom meeting hosted by the BSVCA on July 13, 2022 I asked Alexandria Carroll, the lead T&ES representative for the Safe Streets to School initiatives if the department had updated information relating to how many school children would use this route to the Polk School. The draft plan prepared in 2016 for this Safe Streets Grant Application indicated that the Last Travel Tallies and Parent Surveys were collected in 2014 and that updated information would be required to be collected for the application to VDOT for federal Grant funding under SRTS, the Safe Routes to School Program. This made the data referenced 7 years out of date. She said that at this time there are no plans to update the data and indicated that we submit any additional questions we had by Sunday July 17<sup>th</sup>. I did submit questions on July 18<sup>th</sup> but did not receive a reply to my questions and suggestions from Christopher Ziemann Chief of Transportation Planning, DT&ES or her until July 22, 2022. At that time, he indicated that they were applying for a Safe Streets For All (SS4A) Grant from the federal Department of Transportation not the Safe Streets to School Program that the original draft application referenced. The Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) grant program is part of the Bipartisan Infrastructure program recently passed by Congress. Note these are competitive grants and because of the passage of this legislation the federal pot currently has more dollars available. Both state and federal Safe Streets Grant applications we might apply for have grant analysts who are going to want such information. Below is descriptive information about the grant Alexandria intends to apply for.

<https://www.transportation.gov/grants/SS4A>

In the questions and recommendations, I submitted to T&ES I volunteered to survey all the residents along Pelham, Polk, and the single-family homes below Polk and above Richenbacker as well as Parkside to get a more accurate count of the number of children walking to Polk School. We could also ask how many children might be walking up to Hammond School using this route.

Among the questions I asked T&ES was what date the application needed to be submitted by to apply for the SRTS Grant? What were the projected costs of the other elements of the Grant outlined in the Draft Plan they plan to submit besides the \$100,000 sidewalk? Since their own draft application referenced in this hearing stated that the number of students projected to use the sidewalk had to, by their own admission, be updated why hadn't they surveyed the residents of Parkside Pelham, Polk and the single family homes below Polk and above Richenbacker about how many children who would walk to Polk School were living in the homes along this route?

In his email Mr. Ziemann indicated that while it would be nice to have such updated data, they were directing staff to collect other data addressing other safety issues like the ones I brought up in my questions and at this time he does not have the time and staff to do this. I again offer my services to collect such data from residents on Pelham, Polk, and the adjacent single-family homes and Parkside so that the department can submit this updated data as part of their application. My labor is free and I have collected such data before for other grant applications. I want to help.



All of the densely populated communities in this part of the West End have problems with the limited availability of parking. These include the Willow Run rental apartments, KMS, Hollandtowne, Parkside at Alexandria, Overlook, and Seminary Towers. The parking problems in the KMS Townhomes located across from the Willow Run rental apartments on Richenbacker are particularly acute. KMS includes, Townhomes on North Van Dorn, North Vail, Terril, and North Pelham. In the late 1990's I, together with other neighbors, began protesting to local elected officials, T&ES, the BSVCA about the problem. I coordinated the efforts of KMS neighbors in a long campaign to have our concerns addressed. It took about 3 1/2 years of effort with multiple meetings with City Staff, local elected officials, and multiple petitions to the Parking Board. This was during the time that Kerry Donley was Mayor.

We originally petitioned for permit parking such as was available down in "Old Town" but this was denied. Part of the problem is that in 1968 when our KMS townhomes were constructed the service roads next to our houses were conveyed with a public right of way. This meant that although we were supposed to have at least one parking space in front of each house and we owned this land and paid taxes on it that anyone could park on our service roads as well as the street. We kept meeting with members of City Council and Rich Baier head of T&ES about this problem and finally secured approval of a plan that would convey the service roads to the KMS homeowners through the vacation of the public right away so that they could have the exclusive right to one parking space in front of their own homes.

The City also agreed to repave all of the service roads and the streets which had not been done since they were built in 1968, they also put in handicapped dips at each of the corners, signage indicating where it was safe to park, including sufficient space so fire engines could access fire hydrants and the right to come in under the City's paving contract, using their leverage for lower prices when we needed to pave the service roads in the future. The City remained responsible for the maintenance of the public roads, the curbs and sidewalks. As many KMS townhomes have two people working and thus two cars and sometimes have older children in residence who drive and use cars to go to work or go to school there is a great need for parking. Thus, KMS residents need to park on the streets as well as the service roads.

After these improvements to our streets we continued to petition for permit parking because in addition to the local competition for parking between residents we also have people who work in BRAC or downtown DC would come and park on our streets and then take buses to their destinations so that they did not have to pay for parking at work. We have also had problems where truckers, including freight trucks would park their rigs on our streets. We also had people performing vehicle maintenance on the street which is illegal. We did get a permit parking program which allowed us to apply and pay for a hang tag for visitors, and people doing work on our homes. But we were recently told that this program has been discontinued. However, conversations with the new City Manager give us hope that perhaps the permit applications system would be reactivated.

The “Parking Wars” were not a lot of fun particularly because Dwight Dutton who at the time owned the rental properties then called Jamestowne Village now called Parkside ( they were turned into condos which could be bought by residents) also owned the parcel of land T&ES calls Polk Park. Dutton presented multiple proposals to the Planning Commission which were all vehemently opposed by local residents who felt that the slope was too steep, that such building would create yet another dense development and additional competition for parking because there was not sufficient parking included for the proposed townhouses. It was also stated that too many trees would be removed and this would create soil erosion and the run-off water which would impact the homes on the south side of Polk and in the single-family homes just below between Polk and Rickenbacker. What local residents wanted was to preserve the trees and greenspace. Residents also wanted this land to be used as a park.

If you look at Docket Item #12 for December 4, 2012 of the Planning Commission you will find the record of the transfer of the 2.4 acres of property at 5325 Polk was purchased for \$1.9 million of which \$1.5 million was received from DOD for the acquisition of open space land supplemented by \$0.4 million from the city’s CIP Open Space Fund. On page 4 of that document under Future Use of the Property the following was undictated as future improvements. Removal of a house foundation, improved trail access, park furnishing, including benches and a trashcan, as well as any need maintenance of the forested area. Costs were estimated at that time to be \$78,000 to \$170,000 and would require CIP funding and require the approval of the Parks and Recreation Commission and Department. To date such improvements have not been made. Local residents would very much like to have improvements made to the park to make it more usable.

A hole was punched in the fence between Parkside and Pelham allowing more people to park down on Pelham. Thus, the people on this street face competition for parking from residents both from the 399 units at Willow Run and the 379 units at Parkside. At the BSVCA zoom meeting on July 13, 2022 several people indicated that they were strongly opposed to eliminating the nine parking spaces. Ms. Carroll indicated that this was not possible and the removal of the parking spaces was necessary to accommodate the sidewalk. She also said that she had visited this street during daylight hours and found that there was plenty of parking. The visit was for about 20 minutes as I understand it. But the real crunch comes at night when people come home from work or school. And KMS residents can only park in the one space immediately in front of their homes or on the street. T&ES has not done a recent parking survey of the Parking on Pelham and Polk as is normally done when a permit parking program is indicated or where parking is contentious.

### **History of the Development of this Sidewalk Building Parking Place Taking Proposal and Guidelines and Goals for Federal and State Grant Programs to Promote Safe Streets**

This is the audit that was conducted and is listed on the T&ES website listing the history of the development of this sidewalk/parking proposal. It was part of a plan to make

other infrastructure improvements in and around the Polk School re signage, curb improvements, cutting of tree limbs and overgrown bushes, public outreach etc. I had asked how much each of these plan elements were budgeted for.

<https://media.alexandriava.gov/docs-archives/localmotion/info/alexandria-walkabout-power-point-template=revised=8=7=17.pdf>

Nationally the various different Safe Streets Grants have been used to improve transportation infrastructure, limit accidents and fatalities, to improve the safety of walking, bike riding and facilitate the ability of residents to take buses and mass transit. This is because many bike groups and other civic advocates urged Congress and the USDOT to include programs and funding for a variety of initiatives designed to:

- 1) Make street intersections safer and reduce accidents.
- 2) Promote the use of bikes to reduce pollution and increase health and wellness benefits by encouraging biking, walking and taking public transport to reduce the number of vehicles on the road thus reducing air pollution.
- 3) Promote equity and inclusion of benefits by encouraging programs which benefit low income residents, and minority residents which in the past have often been left out of initiatives to improve street safety and pedestrian safety because they lacked the political power to demand such improvements. The goal was to promote programs which helped these populations get to the places they needed and wanted to go such as schools, recreation centers, parks, work. Many of these residents rely on busses and mass transit to a greater degree than the general population so connections to these hubs was also important.

I have advocated for more money for mass transit including busses, circulator busses, biking, the expansion of bike racks in the West End, and increased opportunities for children to be able to walk and bike to school safely. I have advocated for more after school recreation activities both sports activities and arts enrichment programs. Enhancement of such enrichment programs are especially important for low income and minority students and equity promotion is one of the goals of the Safe Streets to School, and Safe Streets and Roads Grant Programs. Additionally, kids who have a place to go to play sports, learn to dance, participate in visual arts projects or get tutoring, are engaged, in a safe place. Their moms or grandparents may also be participating in a sport, yoga or dance class at the rec center. Studies show that kids that have such opportunities are less likely to hang out on the streets, get in trouble or get involved with guns.

Bikes are very expensive and the income of the average bike owner in Alexandria is over \$100,000 and most bikes can cost over \$1,000. I know about bike issues because my son worked his way thru school as a bike courier. Currently ACPS indicates that 83% of our students are eligible for free and reduced-price lunches. This means their families have very low incomes. For example, if you have one child to be eligible your income may not exceed \$13,590. The amount of income increases according to the family size. If you have 5 children your income eligibility is \$32,470. These families have difficulty

paying for food and rent and usually do not have sufficient income to purchase a bike. At Polk 78% of the 730 students enrolled at Polk are minority students but enrollment at the school (according to ACPS) has been dropping recently. This could be because housing is increasingly costly, and because people lost jobs or child care. Some family members may have died from Covid. All of these issues may have caused people to move. Some people have also taken their children out of school to send them to private and religious schools.

So, children, who might want to bike, probably cannot afford bikes, or helmets and other things they may need. I do think we have to focus on programs which would make bikes more affordable to lower income families. While there are a limited number of programs which rehabilitate donated bikes and provide them to lower income residents they are not enough to meet the need. Otherwise biking to school is only an option for children from wealthier families. I am mentioning all of this because I know that some members of the Parking Board are big supporters of biking. But right now most bikers are well to do. This does not fit the income equity goals encouraged by these grant programs. More needs to be done for low income students and residents.

Also needed are rules and regulations related to scooters as I expect they are going to become more popular. But not all such scooters are safe and we need rules and regulations to insure that they are safe and do not dump a child on the ground causing injury because of faulty scooter mechanisms ( recent articles in the press have indicated such problems with scooters) and ways to insure that they are properly and securely locked at schools. I do think that we have to look very carefully at all of these issues.

The question is what are our highest priorities in terms of helping children to go safely to school and residents to feel safe walking in their neighborhoods both day and night? What are our priorities in terms of improving access to Recreation Centers and after school programs and recreational facilities that children and residents use? How can we facilitate this? Personally, I think instead of using \$100,000 for this sidewalk I would rather spend about \$5,000 to pay for putting in the crosswalk and signs, and take the balance and put it into other key intersections and routes in the West End where we know that students and residents are walking to school and pedestrian travel is unsafe. To me these would be a far higher priority to provide safety both for local residents and children going to schools and recreations centers and to get to bus stops that serve them and commuters safely. Two areas in the West End stand out as locations where local residents are very interested in making improvements. One is the Intersection of Van Dorn and Richenbacker/Sanger others are intersections along Taney and further down Richenbacker closer to the Polk and Patrick Henry school and Rec center which the BSVCA President has been discussing with T&ES. Bob Garbatz discussed ways that these streets could be made safer with the Civic Association in a zoom call.

T&ES indicated that this sidewalk on Polk was necessary as part of their commitment to provide "complete streets." There was no huge local clamor by residents to do this. Rather it appears to be because this fits the Safe Streets template to put in sidewalks where they are missing. There are many places where sidewalks are missing that might be a higher priority in terms of the number of children and residents served.

Again, this is why we need updated surveys relating to how many children are going to use this route. Improving the intersections on Richenbacker and Van Dorn and Taney and would greatly enhance the ability for children to walk to school and provide safety for all residents and commuters. I would rather see these proposed funds used where residents have indicated problems and a need for transportation infrastructure improvement to improve safety.

Near where I live on Vail Street residents have expressed great interest in improving the intersection at Richenbacker and Van Dorn for a very long time and have brought these issues up with T&ES and elected representatives many times. The traffic on Van Dorn is posted at 35 MPH but many exceed this speed. There have been both accidents and many near miss accidents at this intersection. The light needs to be retimed to make it easier to make the turn from Richenbacker/Sanger on to Van Dorn going left up to Landmark Mall. When on Sanger which becomes Richenbacker at the intersection with Van Dorn visibility is very poor in both directions. The cross walk for people on the bus is difficult because of the poor timing of the light and the fact that there is very little space to stand while waiting to cross the road. The bus stop on the other side in front of the KMS Townhouses on that side of Van Dorn is also important. People end up getting off buses and walking home via the service road in front of KMS homes because the sidewalk has badly heaved. You will see commuters, children, women pushing strollers with babies and toddlers walking down the service road where cars may be driving and there is a sharp curve in the service road making this particularly dangerous. The visibility is very poor because the bushes and trees there have to be cut back to make it easier to see people, as cars come around the service road curve. Similarly, the bushes next to the bus stop need to be kept pruned and the limbs of the trees in this area need to be pruned so that they do not break and fall on pedestrians and or cars. Finally, there are many places where there is no sidewalk on the side of Van Dorn closest to 395. Note these improvements would not only help students attending the Polk School but also the students attending the Ramsey School and Rec Center on Sanger.

Again, I invite Members of the City Council, The Parking Board, the City Manager, and City Staff and the BSVCA membership to come and view these locations and discuss with residents their concerns and recommendations for improvements to transportations infrastructure to improve the safety of our school children and other residents.

Thank you for your attention and interest.

Questions for The Department of Transportation and Environmental Services Relating to Grant Funding to Facilitate Investments in Infrastructure and provide other Resources to Enhance the Safety of School Children and Residents on Our Streets.

From: Shirley Downs  
1007 North Vail Street  
Alexandria, VA 22304  
Phone: 703-945-7958  
Email: shirley-downs@comcast.net

- 1) I understand that there are several potential sources of funding:
  - a) Funding via the Neighborhood Sidewalk Grants
  - b) Funding via the Safe Streets to Schools Grants
  - c) Other potential sources of funding such as the STP-Urban Program, and LoCip
- 2) Can T&ES provide information on how much potential funding is available to Alexandria via each of these programs?
- 3) What are the filling deadlines for grant applications for funding under each of these programs?
- 4) T&ES indicated they plan to apply for funding under the Safe Streets to Schools Grant. In reading about the kinds of initiatives that are funded under these grants and in looking at the proposal you attached there seem to be a number of elements you intend to seek funding for. Can you break down the projected budget outlays for improvements outlined for each of these elements including hardscape, the sidewalk, infostructure, signs, the trimming back of trees and bushes for greater visibility, improved lighting and any other elements in this application you hope this grant will pay for as well as the total dollars you hope to receive from this grant.
- 5) Are there any matching funds from the city or other groups required or encouraged in this application as an indication of community interest and support?
- 6) In your description of the data provided related to the number of children who would be walking to school it was indicated that this data was collected in 2014. It is now 2022 so the data is 8 years old. We know that as a result of the corvid pandemic local enrollment in some local schools has dropped. Some families have moved because they lost or changed jobs, because the death of family members or because the cost of housing has increased so much or because some families decided to enroll their children in a private or religious school.

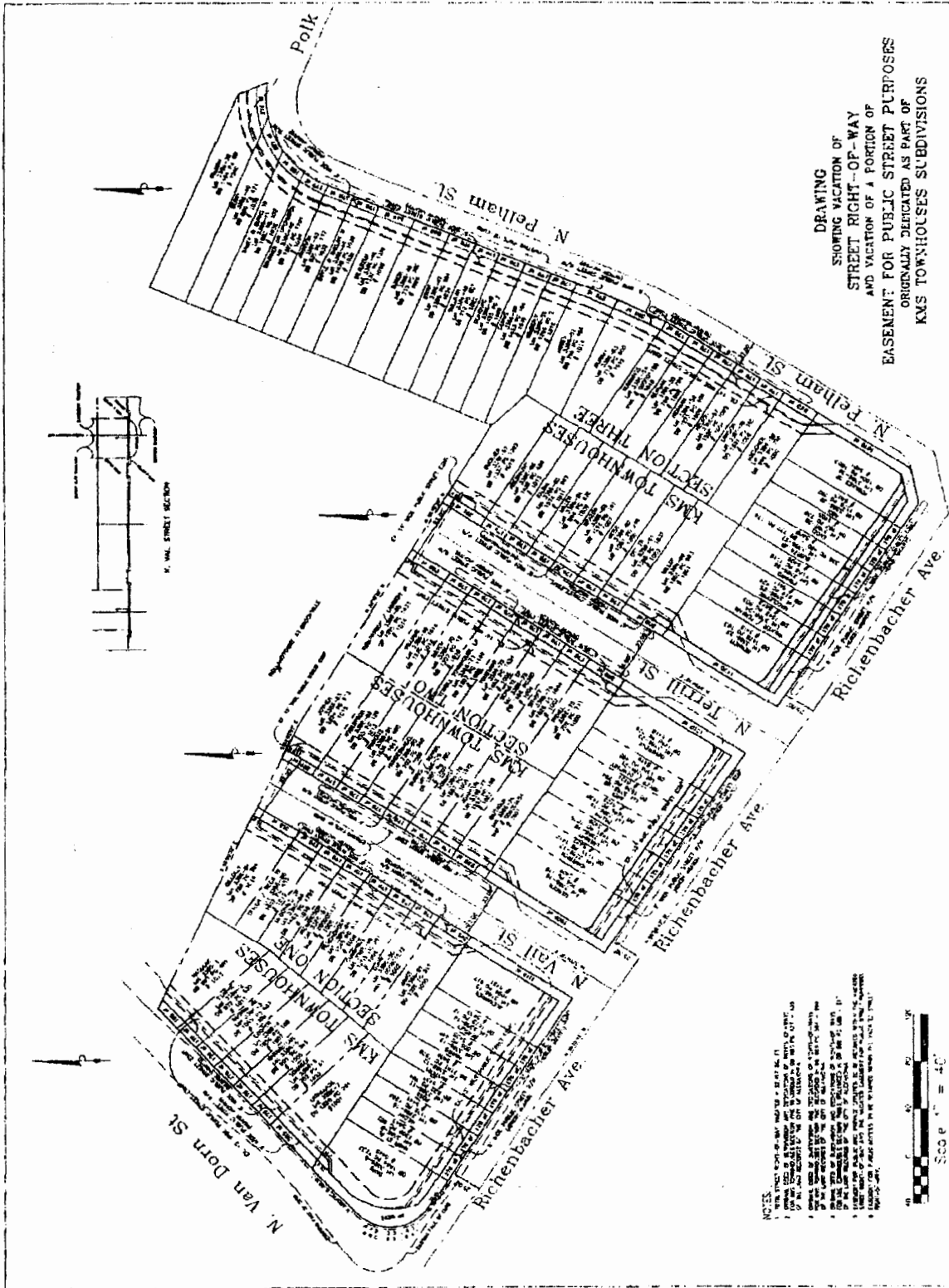
Has enrollment at Polk School increased, decreased, remained the same as it was when this data was collected in 2014? At the end of the summary of your plan about the number of children involved it was stated that this data would need to be updated. How do you plan to do this?

- 7) Some options to improve the data as it applies to Polk Street would be to survey the residents who:
  - a) Reside at Parkside -This could be done by asking the Manager of Parkside to survey the residents and ask how many of the families there had school age children attending Polk. It is possible that since this is a rental property, they already have this kind of data in the leases that residents signed or a letter could be sent to tenants asking for this information and listing why it was important.

- b) Reside in the homes on Polk, the townhouses and single-family homes living on Pelham, and the single-family homes immediately below Polk and above Richenbacher
- 8) At the same time we are asking these home owners about the number of school age children who reside in these locations we could also ask these homeowners if they had drainage problems on their properties. If this required them to put in a sump pump, fix foundation cracks, install French drains, or pay for other improvements related to moisture, mildew, and water run off related to the steep hills built on clay that our homes are built on.
- 9) Can Additional Elements be added to this application for Transportation infrastructure funding? There are two other dangerous intersections which in our West End community.
  - a)As you are aware from your conversations with BVSCA President Ashley Dalton you are aware of public safety concerns for children and local residents at the intersection near her home on Taney Avenue relating to cars speeding, not stopping at stop signs and the fact that foliage can obstruct a drivers vision of small children, pets and other residents along this route and at this intersection.
  - b)A second very dangerous intersection is at the Corner of North Van Dorn and Richenbacher Ave. There is very, very heavy traffic along Van Dorn it is very difficult to turn from Richenbacher onto Van Dorn and vision is also obstructed for drivers coming via Sanger Avenue and attempting to turn onto Van Dorn. There have been many near accidents as well as actual accidents involving cars trying to make these turns. There is a major bus stop there right in front of the KMS Townhomes that face Van Dorn. Commuters, and children walking home from school in that area are at great risk as are the women pushing strollers with children who have been on the bus. The streetlight needs to be timed both to improve traffic flow and to improve safety. Additionally, there are gaps in the sidewalk all along the side of Van Dorn nearest 395 running North. There are also areas where bushes and tree limbs need to be trimmed back to improve visibility and provide safety from oncoming cars. There are also areas where the sidewalk has heaved so much that it is difficult to walk, ride a bike or push a stroller.

If these projects could be incorporated into the application for funding it would greatly enhance the safety of children going to school and the safety of local residents.

KMS Townhomes Vacation of Right-of-Way  
 Docket Item #18, Planning Commission Meeting  
 October 3, 2000



DRAWING  
 SHOWING VACATION OF  
 STREET RIGHT-OF-WAY  
 AND VACATION OF A PORTION OF  
 EASEMENT FOR PUBLIC STREET PURPOSES  
 ORIGINALLY DELICATED AS PART OF  
 KMS TOWNHOUSES SUBDIVISIONS

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## CouncilComment@alexandriava.gov

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**From:** burnskathy1036@gmail.com  
**Sent:** Friday, September 16, 2022 3:27 PM  
**To:** CouncilComment@alexandriava.gov  
**Cc:** Gloria Sitton  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL]Correction for last two lines of my statement on Page 4---should read:  
**Attachments:** Traffic and Parking Board unanimously approves Polk Avenue sidewalk despite neighbor objections.docx; Don't Pave Our Park [full story and link).docx; Your Views\_ Time to shift priorities - Alexandria Times.pdf; Rashad Young DEC2012.pdf

**Importance:** High

CORRECTION for TYPO at bottom of Page 4 of statement, for 2<sup>nd</sup> line from the bottom of page

“Go down Pegram for one block, and **turn right on Richenbacher**, which is much wider....

I had a typo. Spell Check doesn't catch lapses by the writer.

Glad I made it to your office by 3 pm!!!

thanks.

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**Will there be anything on the Alex Website that lists the speakers for Docket Item 13?**

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**From:** burnskathy1036@gmail.com <burnskathy1036@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, September 16, 2022 2:38 PM  
**To:** CouncilComment@alexandriava.gov  
**Cc:** gloria sitton <gloria.sitton@alexandriava.gov>  
**Subject:** Submission for Council for Sept. 17, 2022 DOCKET ITEM 13  
**Importance:** High

Submission of Comments for Public Hearing on Sept. 17, 2022

DOCKET ITEM #13 ---Parking Issues APPEAL

By Kathleen M. Burns, 1036 N. Pegram, Alexandria, VA 22304  
[Burnskathy1036@gmail.com](mailto:Burnskathy1036@gmail.com) cell: 703-624-2097

I am the chair of the Brookville-Seminary Valley Civic Association (BSVCA) Open Space Committee

I was duly appointed by a unanimous vote of the BSVCA Board on Nov. 17, 2021.

Dear Mayor and Council Members,

We are here today because 155 local Alexandria residents signed a PETITION to file this APPEAL to the Council to rescind or repeal a decision by the Parking and Traffic Board on July 25, 2022.

This quest for the TES sidewalk on Polk has deep roots and shallow factual data on any proven need for such an intrusion into a pristine Urban Oasis.

This Public Hearing pits 155 tax-paying residents and constituents of our elected Council members against One Very Powerful Agency--the Transportation and Environmental Services (TES). Those odds of 155 to 1 are important in assessing how you individual members of Council will vote.

- As residents on the West End and throughout the City, we hope that the 2019 Council decision on the fate of Seminary Road will NOT become the role model for 5325 Polk. And not the basis for future TES and City policies decisions.

The City had planned a sidewalk for Seminary Road, but officials were stymied when VDOT rejected, the day after the vote, the promise of an earlier grant. In this instance, TES and City officials initially lined up the Road Diet debate on Seminary Road before the Transportation and Parking Board, which voted it down. To counteract that move, TES and City officials teed it up for a Council hearing. In that astounding verdict, the City overruled the valid Petition signed by 13,000 local residents to NOT accept the TES plan. The Council action was not good governance, not good traffic policy, nor good design. Since that Council decision, there have been 5 significant accidents at Quaker and Seminary are under investigation.

As with the Seminary Road debate, this Sept. 17 Public Hearing pits 155 tax-paying residents and constituents against TES. Those odds of 155 to 1 are important in assessing how you individual members of Council will vote.

Council members are being asked to decide whether you will support the "Will of the People" approach or endorse the TES engineers in their one-sided approach. For guidance in this decision, perhaps Council members need to use the mantra applied to healthcare workers and apply it to engineers and urban planners in these sidewalk and road use decisions: "First do no harm." Or the proposition that "A false premise leads to a false conclusion." [A false premise is an incorrect proposition or assumption that forms the basis of an argument and renders it logically unsound.]

**Today's hearing needs to focus on three relevant issues:**

- **Removal of 9 essential on-site Parking Spots** on the one-block stretch on Polk Avenue. But the removal of those parking spots goes well beyond that one street. Our competition for any available parking already has residents from the 92 KMS townhouses (without driveways between houses) now having to walk several blocks...if and when they find parking on Polk or on Palmer Place or anywhere else.

The TES plan ignores the significant differences in availability between daytime and the nighttime parking needs.

Unfortunately, TES also avoids any mention of the removal of easily accessible parking for the daily Park visitors who drive here to park on Polk and then climb the path to the top of 5325 Polk Open Space Park. Without reasonable parking access, they won't be able to do that. We would never minimize parking access to other nearby parks like Holmes Run and Fort Ward.

- **A lack of overall neutral, fact-based documentation on how TES reached its various conclusions**, without TES citing any reputable methodology provided by outside, neutral experts. The Outcome was predicted in November 2021 by TES.

The TES information relied primarily on staff-driven comments, and only when some community residents questioned the numbers presented in a widely distributed news article, [see ATTACHMENT: July 27, 2022, from AlxNOW media) did TES attempt to provide limited additional data from outside sources. But TES chose to limit the scope of the study by National Data Surveying and Services, and thus compromised the ability to create a more complete report. The company provides only the factual information. They do not write the report or provide recommendations.

- **TES has failed to offering any reasonable alternatives** to only a sidewalk, which will require annual snow shoveling and maintenance, and provides a one-sided assessment of options. As former US Representative Barney Frank has said: “You are entitled to your opinions, but not your own facts.”

Go beyond the fallback stance of the “right-of-way” (which is not carved in stone) and look at possibilities that don’t remove 9 parking spots and that have no current or future potential to harm the structure of the Park.

TES has offered no cost-benefit analysis on how they came up with the \$100,000 sidewalk price tag, to justify this project. TES waived a mandatory Environmental Impact Statement, which is usually standard for government land use projects, especially on a fragile site. TES ignored geological and scientific data (provided by outside, neutral experts) on the site, which has a 49% slope, on marine clay, with underground water sources, with a large sign proclaiming this is a WATERSHED PROTECTION ZONE, and a Nature Center.

In spite of repeated requests to TES staff and our elected political officials, there has been an adamant refusal to consider a reasonable, viable, safe, cost-conscious alternative---which has gotten no traction, even though it is the preferred option by residents who would be impacted by the sidewalk. As a taxpayer, a constituent of our elected Council, and as a parent, who values safety for children and adults, I remain alarmed that the official Decisions Makers are **not evaluating the Pros and Cons of not only the sidewalk, but of the Alternative-----of a \$5000 Crosswalk** from one side of Polk to the other, **with appropriate signage**, including a Curve in the road sign; reduced School Zone speed limits to 15 mph (as are found for other Alexandria schools); bright signs with walking boys and girls.

Council members have a fiduciary and moral responsibility to weigh the costs of \$100,000 sidewalk versus a \$5000, Crosswalk, with appropriate signage minor traffic modifications, since cost is factor in your judgments. There is no proof that the sidewalk is “automatically safer” than a striped Crosswalk, or that paying less for one of the two options is somehow less worthy. Save us money and put that other \$95,000 in cost to other Citywide needs, like the intersection of Van Dorn/Sanger/Richenbacher--which has a 35-mph speed limit and limited warning signs, tied to the 3 schools use that Crosswalk (Ramey, Hammond, Polk) and there needs to be better signage for ALL Pedestrians and those taking buses on Van Dorn.)

What the school officials, parents, concerned residents and taxpayers are all looking for is **A SAFE PEDESTRIAN CROSSING ON POLK AVENUE**---and that option should not be limited to only the impervious sidewalk.

- Take another broader look at School Input in this sidewalk decision. And start at the Top.

We have a dynamic, knowledgeable and informed new Interim School Superintendent **Dr. Melanie Kay-Wyatt** and she should have some input in the TES Sidewalk versus the 5325 Polk Open Space Park, which happens to be near Polk School. She is probably a more realistic appraiser of overall School Policy for all neighborhood sidewalks than the PTA or principals who are not experts in engineering, construction or sidewalks.

I spoke with her on Sept. 15 at the dedication of the Winkler Preserve and noted the irony that when DOD took 6 acres from the Winkler Park in order to build BRAC, the DOD was required to find another Open Space replacement. Through DOD mitigation, there were 13 Finalists for the site, and 5325 Polk won unanimously. DOD authorized \$1.5 million in mitigation funds, and Alexandria added another \$400,000, and the City signed the enabling legislation on Dec. 4, 2012.

She was not aware about school and neighborhood controversy of the TES sidewalk versus the Open Space Park near Polk School and she said she would like to refer the issue to her chief of operations, for advice and input. Sidewalks are NOT just a decision for individual schools ---with varying circumstances---but a school-wide Policy issue.

Dr. Kay-Wyatt also said the Operations officer may also be able to look into another issue involving Polk Avenue and that is speeding school buses (which have been an issue for over 20 years, and one cited by City Manager Jim Parajon.) These buses make crossing the street difficult for children and adults, and no sidewalk will be a magical solution. But fining drivers of these buses could be one possibility, and changing the route and having the buses from Polk turn left, go down Pegram for one block, and right on Richenbacher, which is much wider, could be another change. And students on Polk or Richenbacher aren't taking the school buses.

Thank you to Council members for your time and interest on Docket Item13

I would like to include the following items as ATTACHMENTS to the end of my Statement:

1. "Traffic and Parking Board unanimously approves Polk Avenue sidewalk despite neighbor objections" by Vernon Miles, July 27, 2022
2. "Don't Pave the Park," Alexandria TIMES, April 21, 2022
3. "My View: Time to Shift Priorities," Alexandria TIMES, July 14, 2022
4. Alexandria Press Release by then-City Manager Rashad Young on Dec. 5, 2012, to announce "Consideration of Request to Authorize the Acquisition of the Property at 5325 Polk for use as Open Space.

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# Traffic and Parking Board unanimously approves Polk Avenue sidewalk despite neighbor objections

Vernon Miles July 27, 2022 at 3:50pm

<https://www.alxnow.com/2022/07/27/traffic-and-parking-board-unanimously-approves-polk-avenue-sidewalk-despite-neighbor-objections/>



Where the sidewalk ends on Polk Avenue (staff photo by Vernon Miles)

While several neighbors along Polk Avenue shared thoughts on city plans to replace a stretch of parking with a sidewalk, there was no discussion from members of the Traffic and Parking Board before they unanimously approved the plan.

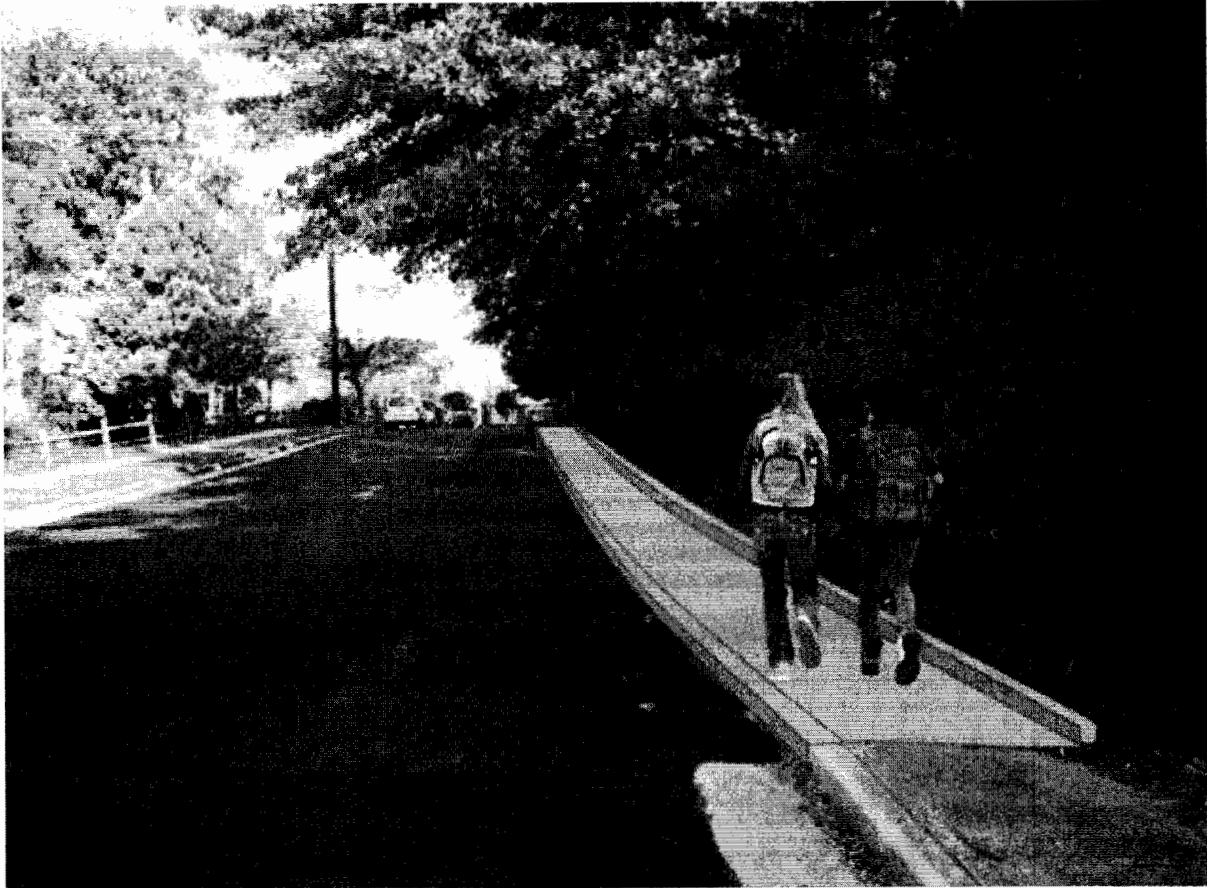
The city is planning to build a new sidewalk that connects two dead-end stretches of sidewalk that cut off abruptly into dense underbrush. The city said the sidewalk construction will help students in the neighborhood walk to Polk Elementary and Hammond Middle School.

“There is an existing sidewalk on the north side,” said Alex Carroll, complete streets program manager for the City of Alexandria. “What this forces people to do when they’re walking on the north side is make one of two choices: cross the street or continue walking in the street to continue on their journey. When there are cars parked on the north side, they end up being placed virtually in the middle of the street.”

Carroll said this problem is exacerbated at the west end of that stretch of road, where the street curves and drivers don’t have the best view of pedestrians crossing the street.

The city’s plan is to remove nine parking space and a small portion of Polk Park — including three trees — to complete the northern sidewalk.

“There are currently 50 on street spaces on Polk Avenue,” Carroll said. “There are three single-family homes on Polk, each of which has a private driveway. Based on staff’s assessment, we feel there is sufficient parking supply to meet demands in this area.”



Rendering of new Polk Avenue sidewalk (image via City of Alexandria)

Some neighbors, meanwhile, shared concerns about the project's impact on neighborhood parking and, to an extent, the impact on the park.

"We worked to get the land for this park for many many years," said Shirley Downs. "Maybe you think it's proprietary, but we really care about this park. We also care deeply and extensively about permit parking."

Jeremy Hogg, whose children attend Polk Elementary, said he was one of the individuals that originally requested something be done on the street to help pedestrians, but said he disagreed with the plans staff drew up.

"I saw buses come around the corner, I saw vehicles going very quickly: It is an area that needs to be addressed," Hogg said. "That being said, I'm not in support of this area as put forward. I think even one of the board members said 'wait a minute, only two options have been put forward and they both involve the elimination of nine spaces?'"



Hogg said the parking spaces on the far side of the street are frequently full and removing them will eliminate the street parking in front of his home. Instead, Hogg suggested removing a few spaces and reconfiguring the plans to add a slightly larger retaining wall.

“Will effectively eliminate all the parking on my side of the road and we will be forced to walk a block away,” Hogg said. “I’m concerned that we’re not going to have ample parking.”

But Jack Browand, division chief of Parks and Cultural Activities, said any plans that involve pushing further into the park could compromise the well-being of some of the park’s largest trees.

“There’s both direct and indirect tree loss,” Browand said. “By pushing the sidewalk in there would be a direct loss of trees. Also, we have to be wary of the critical root zone. When you start cutting into the hill and putting in other stuff, you start cutting into the root zone. So you may not have direct tree loss, but if you start cutting into the root zone you start losing trees outside of the footprint of the construction area because with some of these larger trees that critical root zone is quite large.”

Browand said the city is interested in getting more people to explore Polk Park, but said there are also no plans to make significant improvements. A single trail runs through the park, but it’s in poor shape.

“There are opportunities and we’ve had internal [discussions] with the installation of this sidewalk,” Browand said. “It would provide a better access route to the entrance of this park... There could be opportunities to get more people into this park. It is a naturalized park, there aren’t significant improvements planned because it is intended to be more natural.”

Without discussion, the Traffic and Parking Board voted unanimously to endorse the city’s plan to remove the parking spaces to create the sidewalk connection.

**parks sidewalk**

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(Opens in new window)
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**Published in the Alexandria TIMES, April 21, 2022**

<https://alextimes.com/2022/04/your-views-dont-pave-our-park>

*To the editor:*

Oops. It's time to act again, or "oops" is going to be the city's only appropriate answer to why it would pave a park.

A plan by the Department of Transportation & Environmental Services now on the table to create a sidewalk at 5325 Polk Ave. requires community input by May 22 or it will forge ahead. Say "no."

Currently there's a sidewalk "gap." An existing sidewalk on the north side of Polk ends at Palmer Place, resuming at Pelham. What exists instead is a steep slope and trees. This environmentally sensitive parcel of native trees and plants was preserved in 2012 largely with federal funding in partial recompense for community outrage at destroying six acres of nearby green space without notice to build the Department of Defense's Mark Center. Making it into an open space preserve trumped a competing commercial proposal for dense housing on inadequately drained substrate. It was a long, hard fight involving a broad swath of the community.

T&ES now wants to eliminate five big trees and nine parking places along the street right of way at 5325 Polk and install a five-foot-wide concrete sidewalk, with no plan for drainage or tree wells or attractive berms as exists in many new sidewalk sites such as Robinson Landing. Pervious surfaces might be nice.

To understand why this move is afoot, it's part of a nearly decade-long-process to improve "safe routes to school." This sidewalk gap was identified in a study by VDOT in 2014 in its analysis of safe pedestrian routes to school in Alexandria. In 2016, it confirmed that several students at nearby Polk Elementary might be likely to use the proposed sidewalk. Currently, students need to cross Pelham to get to the other side, which has a continuous sidewalk. Polk Elementary is on the south side of the street, so students going to that destination have to cross the street anyway at some point.

The only good news in the plan is that T&ES proposes to improve access to the roadway to the "park" at 5325. Hurray! The city has previously described the parcel only as a "preserve" and to have it now upgraded to a "park" is progress. The park needs a name. How about "Our Old Oaks Preserve and Sanctuary" – or "OOOPS."

*-Carol James, Alexandria*

*(cjcomm@cjcomm.com)*

# Your Views: Time to shift priorities

Kassidy McDonald - July 14, 2022



To the editor:

On July 1, the City of Alexandria leapt into FY2023. Earlier in May, City Council had approved the annual budget of \$849,213,971. And now the city staff of more than 900 employees – and their agencies – will oversee how the budget details are implemented and how that money is spent.

If a project pushed by the city's Transportation and Environmental Services costs nine and a half times the neighborhood's recommended alternative, wouldn't the latter be the better choice? Especially if the T&ES choice has the potential for damage, upheaval and destruction of a \$1.9 million asset the city agreed to 'protect and to preserve,' would unnecessarily remove nine parking places, and doesn't have a fact-supported safety reason behind it?

While \$100,000 for the city's proposed project may seem like a tiny pittance out of an \$850 million pile of money, it is a significant amount if you are one of the city's residents who just paid your taxes and you are being asked involuntarily to fund this unnecessary effort, spearheaded by T&ES.

The "target" for this T&ES effort is the 5325 Polk Open Space Park, where plans for a concrete sidewalk within its border could seriously damage the foundational structure of a site that has a slope reaching to almost 50%, with "expandable" clay soil and underground water sources.

T&ES is ignoring input from neighbors living close to this proposed project, which could severely impact their safety and that of their homes; remove nine available on-street parking spaces; create severe damage to the foundations of their homes and streets; and upend a city park, funded with federal and Alexandria dollars. If you lived on the impacted streets, would you be willing to support this T&ES expenditure?

Described as an "Urban Oasis," the park site triggered battles between developers, the city planners and residents, beginning in 2000. Four West End civic associations fought against dangerous encroachments for 13 years, when the property owner finally agreed to sell the 2.3-acre site. The DOD provided \$1.5 million in mitigation funds to compensate for the six acres DOD took to build the BRAC Building and Alexandria added \$400,000 in Open Space Funds. On Dec. 5, 2012, the city authorized the sale and promised to 'protect and preserve' this environmentally fragile site.

And, for almost 10 years, the transaction was considered "settled law." But, suddenly, in November 2021, T&ES decided to ignore the facts from several previous public hearings by the Planning Commission, which had dismissed requests by developers for multi-family

units, ranging from 17 to 42 units. And instead, T&ES has since pushed for an unwanted and unneeded impervious concrete sidewalk within the pristine borders of 5325 Polk Open Space Park.

T&ES avoids the consensus-preferred option by affected neighbors for a striped crosswalk, with appropriate signage, that would cost \$5,000 to \$95,000 less than the environmentally threatening sidewalk within an area designated as a watershed protection zone.

Why is there such a disconnect?

Regardless of where you live in Alexandria, all residents expect that our elected and appointed city officials will provide the requisite "due diligence" when weighing – on our behalf – which projects should move ahead and which shouldn't. Measurement priorities should include the effectiveness, efficiency, safety and cost.

Drive by 5325 Polk and see for yourself.

-Kathy Burns, Alexandria



Details	Reports		
File #:	13-0855	Name:	
Type:		Status:	Agenda Ready
File created:	11/29/2012	In control:	City Council Legislative Meeting
On agenda:	12/11/2012	Final action:	
Title:	Consideration of a Request to Authorize the Acquisition of the Property at 5325 Polk Avenue for Use as Open Space.		
Attachments:	1. <a href="#">December 4 Planning Commission 9.06 Report</a> , 2. <a href="#">13-0855_After Items</a>		
Text			

## City of Alexandria, Virginia

### MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** DECEMBER 5, 2012

**TO:** THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

**FROM:** RASHAD M. YOUNG, CITY MANAGER

**DOCKET TITLE:**

**TITLE**

Consideration of a Request to Authorize the Acquisition of the Property at 5325 Polk Avenue for Use as Open Space.

**BODY**

**ISSUE:** City Council consideration of a request to authorize the City Manager to acquire the property at 5325 Polk Avenue for use as open space pursuant to the Planning Commission approval of such acquisition at its Tuesday, December 4, 2012 public hearing.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That City Council:

1. Receive the 9.06 report and finding on the Planning Commission that the acquisition of 5325 Polk Avenue for open space is consistent with the City's Master Plan;
2. Authorize the City Manager to enter into agreement to acquire the 5325 Polk Avenue property; and
3. Allocate \$1,500,000 in Department of Defense BRAC-133 open space mitigation funding and \$405,000 in City Open Space CIP funding towards this acquisition.

**BACKGROUND:** Section 9.06 of the City's Charter requires that the Planning Commission approve any acquisition or sale of public land to ensure that any such acquisition, sale or change is consistent with the City's Master Plan. On December 4, 2012, the Planning Commission approved the acquisition of the property at 5325 Polk Avenue, deeming it consistent with the City's Master Plan (see attached Planning Commission Docket Item). The cost of this 2.4 acre land acquisition would be \$1.9 million. The City will be financing this acquisition with the \$1.5 million received from the U.S. Department of Defense for open space acquisition in the West End, and the remaining \$0.4 million balance, as well as any associate closing costs, from the City's CIP Open Space Fund.

**DISCUSSION:** None.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** The cost of acquisition of this property is \$1.9 million with \$1.5 million in funding coming from the Department of Defense BRAC-133 open space mitigation payment, and the \$0.4 million balance coming from City CIP Open Space Funds. These City funds will likely need to be replenished in the FY 2014 CIP. Future improvements would likely include trail access, park furnishings, and any necessary maintenance of the forested area. These improvements are estimated to be between \$78,000 and \$170,000 and would require future CIP funding. Ongoing maintenance costs, including trail maintenance, litter removal, and tree care will be reflected in adjustments to the FY2014 Operating Budget.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Attachment 1. December 4, 2012 Planning Commission 9.06 Docket Item

**STAFF:**

Mark Jinks, Deputy City Manager

James Spengler, Director, RPCA

Laura Durham, Open Space Coordinator

## Gloria Sitton

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**From:** burnskathy1036@gmail.com  
**Sent:** Friday, September 16, 2022 2:56 PM  
**To:** Gloria Sitton  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL]LINK FOR ONE OF ATTACHMENTS WITH MY TESTIMONY

**Importance:** High

Dear Gloria,

I inadvertently left out LINK for article on Traffic and Parking Board article by Vernon Miles that I left off:

<https://www.alxnow.com/2022/07/27/traffic-and-parking-board-unanimously-approves-polk-avenue-sidewalk-despite-neighborhood-objections/>

My apologies.

And the slash sign was inadvertently left off LINK---at the end-- on story on "Don't Pave the Park"

Finally, from my brain-dead head, I just realized in the last paragraph on page 4, under Dr. Melanie Kay-Wyatt, two lines from bottom of page, I gave wrong directions for the rerouting the school bus.

Obviously, this is something that SPELL CHECK can't find when the writer makes the Typo

It should say:

**Go down Pegram for one block, and right on RICHENBACHER, which is a much wider, could be another change.**

Kathleen Burns, Past President (2017-2019)

Washington DC, Chapter

Society of Professional Journalists

Desk Phone: (703) 824-1799

Cell Phone: (703) 624-2097

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## Gloria Sitton

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**From:** Dick's Comcast <r\_w\_burris@comcast.net>  
**Sent:** Friday, September 16, 2022 12:00 PM  
**To:** Justin Wilson; canek Aguirre; Amy Jackson; Kirk McPike; Sarah Bagley; John Chapman; Alyia Gaskins; Jim Parajon; Gloria Sitton  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL]Support for the Petition to save 9 Parking Spaces in front of Polk Park, City Council Hearing September 17, 2022

You don't often get email from r\_w\_burris@comcast.net. [Learn why this is important](#)

Dear Mayor and City Council Members:

I am writing to you today to express my opposition to the actions of the Alexandria Parking Commission when they voted against our community regarding the need to save the 9 parking spaces up at Polk Park which T&ES wishes to replace with a \$100,000 Sidewalk. I strongly disagree with that decision and that is why I signed the Parking Petition which calls for keeping the nine parking spaces on Polk, enforcing the Night-Time Permit Parking in District 12 and 12A, and conducting a Night-Time Parking Survey including all of the streets occupied by the KMS Townhomes, and the immediate area of single family homes below Polk, not a Daytime Parking Survey. I have lived in my KMS Townhouse since 1996. Our neighborhood is very nice with a very collegial atmosphere between neighbors.

But we have had parking challenges for a very long time and worked hard to secure permit parking such as they have in Old Town and Del Ray. When the builder of the KMS development built our townhouses, they provided access roads that are directly in front of the houses, in addition to the public streets. These access roads have always been our property, shown on the plats and included in our property taxes. Unfortunately, the builder granted the city the right-of-way to our access roads, so anyone could legally park in what is effectively our driveways. We went before the Parking Commission several times asking for Permit Parking but were turned down. After a very long campaign the city finally agreed to vacate the public right-of-way, securing for us the exclusive right to park in front of our own houses on the land that we have always owned and paid taxes on.

We still had problems and worked to secure Night-Time Permit Parking on our streets. This is essential because competition for parking is so intense. Residents have to walk several blocks away if they arrive late, e.g. after 8:30 PM, at night. Typically, it takes about twenty minutes to find a parking space. KMS Townhouses have virtually no visitor parking. If you have a dinner party people have to make sure they arrive early so they can search for parking.

I coordinate a discussion group, which meets monthly to visit, have dinner, and discuss various topics. Members find it very challenging to find parking in our neighborhood when they come to our home. They wander about looking for parking sometimes for 20 minutes and often have to park far away on Pelham or Polk or even further because there is no parking available on Van Dorn, Vail, Terrill, and Richenbacher, so they then must go to Pelham and Polk to find parking.

If you park in the wrong place, your car is towed, then you have to go to the impound lot and pay a fine of \$250 dollars. This happened to one of my guests. Friends on Pelham had similar experiences when they have a dinner party, with guests looking for parking. Basically, one cannot hold events such as a baby shower or large anniversary party at night because they usually involve many more invitees.

So, although Members of City Council understand that everyone in a city has parking problems, our situation is much worse.



Our problems have become even worse because of the lack of parking enforcement and the fact that young college age children have often moved back home because rents have risen and they cannot afford housing. These young people are home and so are their cars, which they need to get to school and work. This was worse when schools were closed because of covid and students could attend only zoom classes. Families are coping the best they can.

The Willow Run Apartments, on Richenbacher, now have more tenants because when rents are raised people share the apartments with other family members and friends to be able to pay the rent. Then there are more cars to park.

Everyone in the neighborhood is looking for parking. This makes the 9 spaces on Polk absolutely essential.

Thank you for your review of these experiences.

Sincerely,

Richard W. Burris

1007 North Vail Street

Alexandria, VA 22304

Phone: 703-300-1181

Email: [r\\_w\\_burris@comcast.net](mailto:r_w_burris@comcast.net)

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## Gloria Sitton

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**From:** Jim Parajon  
**Sent:** Friday, September 16, 2022 4:18 PM  
**To:** Gloria Sitton  
**Cc:** Yon Lambert  
**Subject:** Polk Street Parking petition to reject the decision of the Parking Commission of July 25,2022 with consideration by the City Council on September 17, 2022  
**Attachments:** Diane Perchonoc Letter to City Council.pdf

Comments about City Staff in the following letter unfortunately do not reflect the City of Alexandria's Principles of Civic Engagement, which calls for inclusiveness, meaningful engagement and respect. I, as City Manager, strongly support the City's professional staff and have full confidence in the process and staff's performance in this case.

James F. Parajon, FAICP  
City Manager  
City of Alexandria  
301 King Street  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
(703) 746-4300



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CITY COUNCIL OF ALEXANDRIA

RE: POLK PARKING APPEAL

11006 N. VAIL ST  
ALEXANDRIA 22304  
SEP 10, 2022

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN,


I AM WRITING SO THAT YOU OVERTURN THE PARKING BOARD'S JULY 25 DECISION TO WIPE OUT A FULL BLOCK OF OUR NEIGHBORHOOD PARKING. THERE IS LITTLE OR NO PEDESTRIAN TRAFFIC TO WARRANT SUCH AN EXPENSE & THAT WOULD ALSO INCLUDE ON THE FRAGILE EGO SYSTEM W/ A HILL OF 49% SLOPE OF MAKING CLAY SOIL. THE PARKING SHOULD BE SAVED FOR OUR PARK @ 5325 POLK, AND OUR NEIGHBORS.

I ALSO ASK THE COUNCIL TO ASSURE THE RESIDENTS OF PARKING DISTRICT 12/12A THAT THE CITY ENFORCE RESTRICTIONS, AS PROMISED, TO PROTECT THE RESIDENTS OF THIS NEIGHBORHOOD. A GREAT MANY OF OUR NEIGHBORS ARE FORCED TO PARK 4 BLOCKS FROM HOME BECAUSE THE CITY IS NOT ENFORCING THESE RESTRICTIONS.

PLZ ACT NOW TO HONOR & PROTECT OUR HOMES, OUR CHILDREN, OUR STREETS, OUR PARK, OUR EQUITY.

I ALSO RECOMMEND THAT MS ALEX CARROLL OF TES BE DISCIPLINED & FINED, IF NOT RELEASED FROM HER POSITION FOR HER BLATANT INCOMPETENCY, I.E. - ORDERING A SURVEY DURING <sup>THE</sup> DAY OPPOSED TO THE ISSUE IS AT NIGHT, NOT INCLUDING ALL OF KMS PROPERTIES, TO NAME ONLY 2 INFRACTIONS. THERE ARE QUITE A BIT MORE.

Sincerely,

  
DINA L. FEKCHOUK

PLZ EXCUSE MY SPELLING & GRAMMAR ERRORS.