

City of Alexandria, Virginia

Traffic and Parking Board

DATE: July 25, 2022

DOCKET ITEM: 9

ISSUE: Consideration of Parking Removal on Polk Avenue for a Sidewalk

REQUESTED BY: City Staff

LOCATION: Polk Avenue between North Pelham Street and Palmer Place

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: That the Board recommend removing nine on-street parking spaces on the north side of Polk Avenue between North Pelham Street and Palmer Place to support the addition of a sidewalk.

BACKGROUND: In 2017, the City, in partnership with Alexandria City Public Schools, performed Safe Routes to School walk audits for all of the City's 13 elementary and K-8 schools. The purpose of these walk audits was to identify safety challenges that affect students walking and biking to and from school, and develop infrastructure recommendations to address these challenges.

A recommendation from the [Polk Elementary Safe Routes to School Walk Audit Report](#) is to fill the existing sidewalk gap on Polk Avenue between North Pelham Street and Palmer Place.

The City's adopted [Complete Streets Policy](#) is to provide streets that allow for safe and convenient travel for everyone, especially near schools. The [Alexandria Mobility Plan](#) also calls for a continuous, connected sidewalk network.

DISCUSSION: Polk Avenue is a two-lane, local street that provides access to Polk Elementary School, Hammond Middle School, the Brookville-Seminary Valley neighborhood, the Seminary Hill neighborhood, Parkside at Alexandria Condominiums, and a local park.

Currently, there is a sidewalk gap on the north side of Polk Avenue between North Pelham Street and Palmer Place (Attachment 1). Many students from both Polk Elementary and Hammond Middle School walk along this section of Polk Avenue to get to or from school. Students and other neighborhood residents walking on the north side of the street are forced to either walk in the street, or cross the street to access the sidewalk on the south side.

Attachment 3: July 25 Traffic & Parking Board Docket for Polk Avenue

On the west end of the street, a pedestrian pathway connects Polk Avenue to the Parkside at Alexandria condominium community. Residents accessing Polk Avenue from Parkside are led directly into the street, with no sidewalk available to continue east. This part of the street is on a curve, so residents are either forced to walk in the street or cross where sightlines are limited.

Installing a sidewalk where it is currently missing would allow people walking to continue along their route without being unnecessarily exposed to moving traffic. Staff shared a draft concept plan with the community, which included the addition of a sidewalk on the north side of Polk Avenue. After gathering community feedback, staff revised the draft concept plan to respond to concern from some residents about the impact to trees and the adjacent natural area (Attachment 2). In the revised plan, the sidewalk would be installed further into the street, away from the park. As a result, over 80 percent of the sidewalk would be installed on the existing street footprint, further minimizing the amount of new impervious area. Additionally, this change reduces the number of trees impacted from 5 to 4, with the largest 18" tree being preserved.

As part of this plan, nine parking spaces are proposed to be removed (Attachment 3). This area is part of the District 12 and 12A Residential Parking Permit program. On Polk Avenue between North Pelham Street and North Pegasus Street, there are three single-family residential properties that front Polk Avenue, each of which has a private driveway. Meanwhile, there are approximately 50 on-street parking spaces in this same area. On North Pelham Street, there are 21 townhomes and six detached single-family homes. 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 the demand.

Staff received numerous comments directly from residents, with overall support for the addition of a sidewalk. Residents who supported the sidewalk noted that it is unsafe to have to walk in the street or cross, especially near the corner of Polk Avenue and North Pelham Street, where drivers maneuvering around the corner may not see people walking. Several residents noted that they feel vulnerable walking with their children or their dog around the neighborhood due to the lack of sidewalk.

Residents who opposed the sidewalk largely cited concerns about impacts to the park. The sidewalk would not be installed on land designated as open space, but on City public right-of-way. However, staff did revise the plans to alleviate concerns as much as possible. The revised plans reduce the footprint of the project, reduce impervious surface, and reduce impacts to trees. In the revised plan, over 80% of the sidewalk would be built on the existing street footprint instead of 60%, and four trees ranging from 3" to 12" in diameter would be removed, instead of five trees ranging from 3" to 18" in diameter.

Some residents expressed concern regarding the proposed removal of parking. Unfortunately, the project could not avoid impacting parking without introducing more significant impacts to the natural area and increasing project costs. Based on the amount of parking available in the area, staff believe that the reduction of nine parking spaces is a justifiable tradeoff to provide the sidewalk and minimize impacts to the natural area. Of those who identified parking as their primary concern, most support the idea of installing a sidewalk in general.

Attachment 3: July 25 Traffic & Parking Board Docket for Polk Avenue

Staff also received a suggestion to install crosswalks instead of a sidewalk. Staff disagree that crosswalks are an appropriate substitute for a sidewalk, as residents would still be forced to be exposed to traffic unnecessarily, but did consider adding crosswalks as a supplemental treatment. Crosswalks are not recommended where the sidewalk ends at Polk Avenue and North Pelham Street due to the curvature of the roadway and insufficient sightlines to ensure a reasonably safe crossing. Crosswalks could be installed at the intersection of Polk Avenue and Palmer Place where the sidewalk ends, but up to six additional parking spaces would have to be removed on Polk Avenue. Given the concern expressed by some residents about the proposed reduction in on-street parking, staff are not recommending crosswalks at this time in order to minimize the project's impacts to parking overall.

OUTREACH: The City held a community comment period from early April to late May 2022, which was extended through July 2022 based on resident feedback. Project flyers were mailed directly to residents in the project area on Polk Avenue, North Pelham Street, and Palmer Place (Attachment 4). Project information was also shared with the Brookville-Seminary Valley Civic Association, Seminary Hill Association, and Parkside at Alexandria Condominiums. Additionally, staff performed outreach to the principals and parent-teacher associations (PTAs) at Polk Elementary School and Hammond Middle School. Two community meetings were held for this project, including one with the Polk Elementary PTA and one with the Brookville-Seminary Valley Civic Association. Staff also met on-site with concerned residents to discuss the project.

Staff received support for this project from the Polk Elementary PTA, Polk Elementary School, Hammond Middle School, Parkside at Alexandria Condominiums, and the Department of Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities. The Brookville-Seminary Valley Civic Association and the Seminary Hill Association have expressed no stance on the project. A compendium of community comments is provided in Attachment 5.

ATTACHMENTS:

- Attachment 1: Project Location
- Attachment 2: Project Revised Draft Conceptual Plan
- Attachment 3: Parking Map
- Attachment 4: Project Flyer
- Attachment 5: Stakeholder Comments

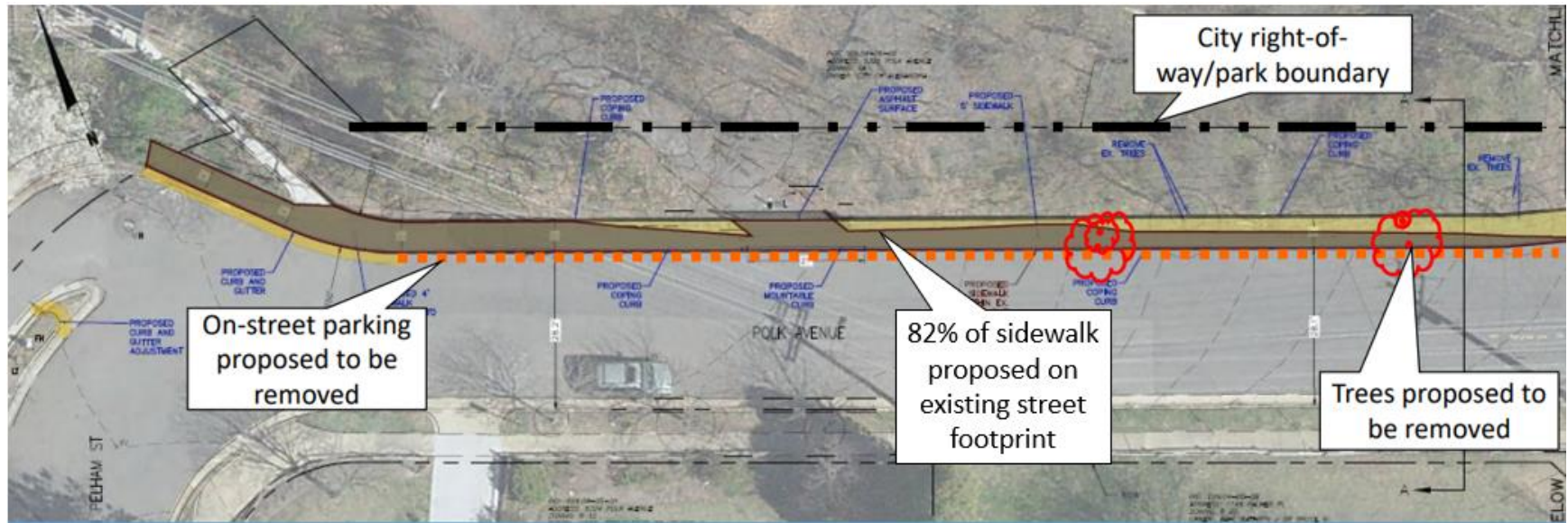
Attachment 3: July 25 Traffic & Parking Board Docket for Polk Avenue

Attachment 1: Project Location



Attachment 3: July 25 Traffic & Parking Board Docket for Polk Avenue

Attachment 2: Project Conceptual Plan (Revised)



Attachment 3: July 25 Traffic & Parking Board Docket for Polk Avenue

**Attachment 3:
Parking Map**



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

Attachment 4:
Project Flyer



POLK AVENUE SIDEWALK SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL PROJECT



Project Area

The City of Alexandria would like your input on filling a sidewalk gap on Polk Avenue near Pelham Street.

This sidewalk would:

- Give people in the neighborhood a safe, dedicated place to walk
- Improve access to the park for neighbors and visitors
- Improve safety and access for schoolchildren walking to Polk Elementary and Hammond Middle School
- Support the City's adopted Alexandria Mobility Plan policy of creating a complete sidewalk network



Existing Condition

Missing sidewalk

Here are some things to know:

- The sidewalk would be approximately 250' long, and 5' wide
- This sidewalk was recommended through a Safe Routes to School Walk Audit for Polk Elementary
- The project is within City street right-of-way
- 5 trees and 9 on-street parking spaces would require removal



Proposed Sidewalk

For illustrative purposes only

Please visit the project website to learn more and provide feedback by May 22.



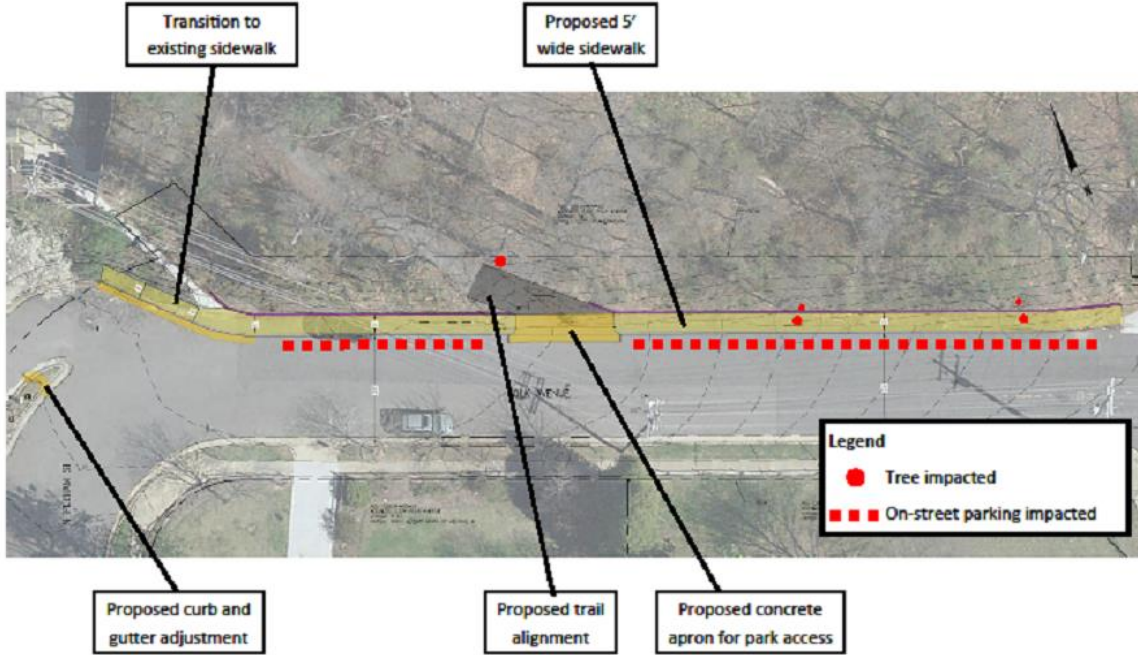
SCAN ME

[www.alexandriava.gov/
transportation-planning/project/
polk-avenue-sidewalk-safe-routes-
to-school-project](http://www.alexandriava.gov/transportation-planning/project/polk-avenue-sidewalk-safe-routes-to-school-project)

Alex Carroll (she/her)
Complete Streets Program Manager
Department of Transportation &
Environmental Services
Alexandria.Carroll@AlexandriaVA.gov

POLK AVENUE SIDEWALK PROJECT

Concept Plan



Attachment 3: July 25 Traffic & Parking Board Docket for Polk Avenue

Attachment 5: Stakeholder Feedback

Letters/Comments on Behalf of Organizations:

From: Jack Browand <Jack.Browand@alexandriava.gov>
Sent: Thursday, July 14, 2022 2:15 PM
To: Alexandria Carroll <Alexandria.Carroll@alexandriava.gov>
Cc: Judy Lo <Judy.Lo@alexandriava.gov>
Subject: Polk Avenue Sidewalk Proposal

Alex,

The Department of Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities (RPCA) supports the City's initiative to ensure safe routes to schools and City parks, and in providing safe pedestrian routes for all pedestrians. RPCA appreciated the collaboration and coordination Transportation & Environmental Services implemented to ensure RPCA goals with preserving open space and in minimizing the direct impact on the City's tree canopy were considered in the final design. Although four trees will be removed from the City ROW, RPCA will identify locations within the park where four or more trees may be replanted.

Thanks
Jack

Jack Browand, Deputy Director, Park Services, CPM CPRP
Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities
1108 Jefferson Street
Alexandria VA 22314
703.746.5504 (office)
202.497.7452 (cell)

Attachment 3: July 25 Traffic & Parking Board Docket for Polk Avenue

From: Polk PTA <talktopolkpta@gmail.com>

Sent: Wednesday, May 18, 2022 7:13 PM

To: Alexandria Carroll <Alexandria.Carroll@alexandriava.gov>

Cc: Carla Carter <ccarter@acps.k12.va.us>

Subject: Letter on Behalf of the Polk PTA re: Sidewalk Continuation on Polk Ave.

Dear Alex Carroll and City of Alexandria T&ES,

On behalf of the James K. Polk Elementary School Parent Teacher Association (PTA), I would like to voice our membership's support for the sidewalk continuation project proposed on Polk Avenue as identified in the 2018 Safe Routes to School study.

One of our highest priorities as a PTA is to advocate for the safety of students and we see the proposed sidewalk as a way to ensure that our students, and the students attending Francis C. Hammond Middle School, remain safely out of the street as they walk to school.

We encourage the City of Alexandria to move forward with the proposed sidewalk continuation project. We are committed to supporting all students' right to a safe route to school.

Thank you,

Chaaron Pearson

President

James K. Polk Elementary School PTA

Email: TalktoPolkPTA@gmail.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/JamesKPolkPTA

Twitter: [@PolkPTA](https://twitter.com/PolkPTA)



James K Polk Elementary School

5000 Polk Avenue • Alexandria, Virginia 22304

Telephone: (703) 461-4180 • Facsimile: (703) 751-8614 • www.acps.k12.va.us

Carla Carter, Principal ~ India Tillman, Assistant Principal ~ Katherine Loiselle, Assistant Principal

Friday, May 20, 2022

Greetings Ms. Carroll,

I am writing to express my strong support for the City's Polk Avenue Sidewalk Project. This project would increase safety for students walking to and from Polk Elementary School by ensuring that children do not have to walk in the street or cross the street when the sidewalk ends.

I participated in the Safe Routes to School Walk Audit the City led for Polk Elementary School, and I observed how the missing sidewalk on Polk Avenue between Pelham Street and Palmer Place forces children and families to make unsafe choices. School arrival and dismissal times are especially hazardous for children and families walking here, since traffic is heavier during these times. Many Polk students and families walk in this area and would greatly benefit from the proposed sidewalk.

Every year, Polk students take a class on safe walking and biking practices, but education alone is not enough. The proper infrastructure must also be in place to ensure that students arrive safely.

Thank you for taking the time to include me in this process and for moving this important safety project forward.

Sincerely,

Carla P. Carter
Principal

Our vision is to build a proud and inclusive JKP community where we encourage all students to become respectful, responsible, and resilient lifelong learners.

Polk Vision Statement



Attachment 3: July 25 Traffic & Parking Board Docket for Polk Avenue

From: Pierrette P. Finney <pierrette.finney@acps.k12.va.us>
Sent: Thursday, April 28, 2022 4:56 PM
To: Alexandria Carroll <Alexandria.Carroll@alexandriava.gov>
Cc: Kristin M. Donley <kristin.donley@acps.k12.va.us>; Jane E. Davis <jane.davis@acps.k12.va.us>
Subject: Re: Polk Avenue Sidewalk Project

Hi Ms. Carroll,

I've had an opportunity to review the flyer. Thank you for including me in the conversation. I fully support the Polk Avenue project as Hammond has roughly 220 students who are walkers. While all 220 don't walk from that direction, a significant number do as they head to and front school.

Finally, I would love to meet to discuss other safety issues listed below. Please let me know your best availability.

Dr. Pierrette Finney
Principal
Francis C. Hammond Middle School
Secondary Principal Lead

Alexandria City Public Schools
703-461-4100

<https://www.acps.k12.va.us/fch>

Follow Us On Twitter - @fchammond and @fchprincipal

Like Us On Facebook -

<https://www.facebook.com/FCHammondMiddleSchool>

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July 11, 2022

To Whom It May Concern,

Parkside at Alexandria Condo Association and its Board of Directors give their full support for the Sidewalk Project on Polk Avenue. We feel this important and necessary sidewalk project is a matter of safety for our resident's children and parents that use this road to get to and from school. Please let us know if you have any questions.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "LWalker", with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Lorenzo Walker, CMCA®, AMS®, PCAM®
General Manager
Parkside at Alexandria

1425-B North Van Dorn Street, Alexandria, Virginia 22304 | parksideatalexandria.com

E generalmanager@parksideatalexandria.com O 703-931-1224 F 703-824-0322

parksideatalexandria.com

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Letters/Comments from Individual Stakeholders:

From: Margaux Denham <margauxdenham91@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, April 06, 2022 1:15 PM
To: Lorenzo Walker <walker@parksideatalexandria.com>
Subject: Re: Polk Avenue Sidewalk Project

Hi Lorenzo,

I visited the website and could not see where I could provide feedback. Thus, I am sending my feedback to you!

I think it would be great to have a sidewalk there! it is dangerous without a sidewalk (we walk there everyday to walk our dog and sometimes bring our baby). If you want to use the sidewalk to access the south gate, it is very hard to see cars with the curvy road. There are also tons of kids walking, so it would be safer with a sidewalk.

thank you for sharing!

From: Bryan Bateman <bryman8692@msn.com>
Sent: Thursday, April 07, 2022 8:23 AM
To: Alexandria Carroll <Alexandria.Carroll@alexandriava.gov>
Subject: re: Polk Avenue Sidewalk Safe Routes to School Project

[You don't often get email from bryman8692@msn.com. Learn why this is important at <http://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification>.]

Good morning Alex,

I am all for this project. Especially since James Polk Elementary School is in such close proximity. My wife and I often walk down Polk Ave at around the same time children are released from school. We live in the Parkside townhome community that has gated access to Polk Ave.

Since parking is permitted on the side of the street with no sidewalk, we've seen children have to walk around parked cars and therefore into the middle of the street. My wife and I have had to do that as well. It can get dicey when cars are also coming down the street at the same time. This project will greatly improve the safety of all pedestrians in this neighborhood.

Thank you,
Bryan Bateman
201-835-5165

From: Andrea Schwartz Freeburg <alschwartzfree@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, April 08, 2022 4:51 PM

Attachment 3: July 25 Traffic & Parking Board Docket for Polk Avenue

To: Alexandria Carroll <Alexandria.Carroll@alexandriava.gov>
Subject: re: Polk Avenue Sidewalk Safe Routes to School Project

[You don't often get email from alschwartzfree@gmail.com. Learn why this is important at <http://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification>.]

Dear Ms. Carroll,

I am a resident at 1038 N Pelham St, and I strongly support the Polk Avenue Sidewalk Safe Routes To School Project. During my time working from home these past two years, I have seen many children walking up N Pelham St in front of our townhome, and then be forced to J-walk across the street right at the corner to connect to the sidewalk that exists on Polk Ave. This street has busses and parents driving their children to school at the same time. I believe it is imperative to give the children a safe and direct way to walk to school without making the choice of walking on a road without a sidewalk or crossing a busy neighborhood street to reach the existing sidewalk. I am a mother of a 2 year old and look forward to sending her to Polk Elementary one day. I hope that she will be able to do this walk safely too. I believe this is critical and demonstrates the city's commitment to children, safety, education, and the environment by providing a safe "green" way for children to get to school. I am excited about this project.

Best Regards,
Andrea Deitz

Sent from my iPhone, please excuse brevity (and typos)

From: Steven Deitz <stevendeitz@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, April 08, 2022 6:03 PM
To: Alexandria Carroll <Alexandria.Carroll@alexandriava.gov>
Subject: re: Polk Avenue Sidewalk Safe Routes to School Project

Dear Ms. Carroll,

I received the flyer for the Polk Avenue sidewalk project today. As a resident near this area, I wholeheartedly support this project! It will have a great safety benefit for a relatively small project. Filling the sidewalk would help pedestrians, especially children walking to school, stay safe from traffic. Right now, because of the sidewalk gap, children walking to Polk Elementary from the far side of N. Pelham St are forced to cross the street at the very low visibility corner of Polk and Pelham streets.

I am happy to provide further comment if helpful. Can you please include me on any significant updates to this project? I hope it happens!!!

Sincerely,

Steven Deitz
1038 N Pelham St.

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From: Kathy Wahl <kathy.wahl@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, April 09, 2022 11:39 AM
To: Alexandria Carroll <Alexandria.Carroll@alexandriava.gov>
Subject: re: Polk Avenue Sidewalk Safe Routes to School Project

[You don't often get email from kathy.wahl@gmail.com. Learn why this is important at <http://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification>.]

Dear Alex

We are familiar with this route as we are the owners of the property pictured across from the proposed sidewalk. We agree that this added sidewalk would provide safer walking on this road. However we also have serious concerns about the project and road safety in general.

1) First, the terrain of the hillside is not level and this project will involve removing a portion of the hill. I see no retaining wall, and no indication if remediation to maintain drainage without initiating an erosion problem is properly planned. I note that a nearby recent sidewalk widening project on a hillside at Hammond on N Pickett (2years ago?) has resulted in serious erosion issues. These have included dislodging of large rocks onto the sidewalk. To date, the city's attempts to fix this have not been successful and the affected area grows with each storm and is repeatedly 'repaired' ineffectively. Sod will not grow on rocks. This does not inspire confidence for the proposed project across from our property.

2) I have reported several times on the daily safety hazard of the speeding school busses coming by along Polk Ave along where the sidewalk is proposed. Calling the bus supervisor accomplished nothing. The most dangerous times are around 3-3:30 pm when the schools are getting out. I'm not sure why this stretch of quiet road and very narrow corner/crowded street on Pelham is a bus route except that there are no speed bumps. The speeding busses are making for a very unsafe environment during school hours and particularly during the times children and families are walking to/from school. Addressing that issue would go a long way towards ensuring safety for our kids and citizens. I invite you to come here on a weekday afternoon and watch the traffic hazard caused by the busses.

Sincerely
Kathy and Bruce Wahl
1148 Palmer Place

Sent from my iPhone

From: Corey Patterson <cwpatters11@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, April 15, 2022 11:44 AM
To: Alexandria Carroll <Alexandria.Carroll@alexandriava.gov>
Subject: [EXTERNAL]Polk Avenue Sidewalk Safe Routes to School Project

Hello,

Attachment 3: July 25 Traffic & Parking Board Docket for Polk Avenue

I'm writing to express my support for the sidewalk addition. In addition to being beneficial for school-age children, the sidewalk would make it easier for runners and walkers to safely get around the neighborhood.

With so many cars parked on the road and driving by, it's dangerous for pedestrians to have to move into the road in that area on Polk Avenue.

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Thank you,

Corey Patterson
(770) 367-0578
<https://www.linkedin.com/in/coreypatterson1/>

From: Kate <kate.evans85@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, April 16, 2022 11:17 AM
To: Alexandria Carroll <Alexandria.Carroll@alexandriava.gov>
Subject: re: Polk Avenue Sidewalk Safe Routes to School Project

[You don't often get email from kate.evans85@gmail.com. Learn why this is important at <http://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification>.]

Hello Alexandria Carroll,

I'm a long time resident of Parkside at Alexandria and I'm hoping to provide feedback on the Polk Avenue sidewalk project. I have a dog that I walk daily around the Polk neighborhood. I have to come through the Parkside gate, and I am forced to walk into the street right at Polk and Pelham, where cars tend to speed around the corner. My neighbors with babies, young children, and their pets are forced to do the same every day. Having a sidewalk here would be much safer for us, and it is something we have wanted for years.

I could not find another way to submit feedback other than emailing you.
Please let me know if there is another way that I should be submitting this feedback.

Thank you for your efforts in this!

Sincerely,
Kate Evans

From: Erin Berry Philp <erinjberry@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, April 29, 2022 4:40 PM
To: Alexandria Carroll <Alexandria.Carroll@alexandriava.gov>
Subject: [EXTERNAL]Comment: Safe Routes to School Walk Audit for Polk Elementary School

Good afternoon -

Attachment 3: July 25 Traffic & Parking Board Docket for Polk Avenue

I wanted to submit my comment in support of the new sidewalk to Polk Elementary School. My family and I live on North Pelham Street and it is a chaotic mess every school morning, since many cars zoom up our street to avoid stop signs on other streets. It is VERY dangerous for students attempting to walk to school.

I not only support a new sidewalk, but I would also support stop signs where North Pelham and Polk meet. I would also support some kind of speeding deterrent, such as a speed table, since cars and school buses frequently reach speeds of around 45-50 miles an hour on our street. My husband and small daughter were almost hit by a speeding school bus one day as he was putting her in her car seat. Speed tables on North Pelham and Polk would greatly deter parents who are carelessly speeding to get their children to school. Pegram has speed tables, and so should these surrounding streets. I have my own child to get to school, and I do not appreciate other people endangering our lives as we try to make it safely to school.

Thank you for the opportunity to voice my support of the initiative.

Sincerely,

Erin Berry Philp
1002 N. Pelham St.
Alexandria, VA 22304

From: Aaron Thomas <athmsvt@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, May 06, 2022 7:38 PM
To: Alexandria Carroll <Alexandria.Carroll@alexandriava.gov>
Subject: RE: POLK AVENUE SIDEWALK SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL PROJECT

Hi Alex,

My community sent out a notice about the Polk Avenue Sidewalk project and I wanted to express my opposition to the project due to its ineffectiveness and the fact it diverts funds from walkways that have been in disrepair and closed for years. The closed walkways have a real impact on mobility in the community.

Note: The link in the flyer does not work and appears to be incorrect.

The proposed sidewalk does not accomplish the proposed goals, has unnecessary build and maintenance costs, and distracts from shutdown paths that have been in disrepair for years.

- The street already has a dedicated sidewalk to the school. As there are no houses or living units in that stretch, it is not apparent how the project would benefit any resident.
- It would require the destruction of additional trees and greenspace
- Other than the implementation of a small extension of the sidewalk to the exit of Parkside of Alexandria and a crosswalk to the other sidewalk on the other side of the street, there is no value in the project.

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- Given the lack of housing on that side of the street where the sidewalk is proposed and the fact it would allocate funds that could serve to repair closed pathways, the project runs counterproductive to the city mobility plan.

Respectfully,
Aaron Thomas
1657B N Van Dorn St

From: burnskathy1036@gmail.com <burnskathy1036@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, June 5, 2022 7:51 PM
To: james.calvin.lewis@gmail.com
Cc: Katie North <katie.north@alexandriava.gov>
Subject: [EXTERNAL]Submission for the Alexandria Parking and Traffic Board
Importance: High

June 5, 2022

TO: Alexandria Traffic and Parking Board:
James Lewis, chair, james.calvin.lewis@gmail.com
Ann Tucker, vice chair
Jason Osborne
Ann Ebbers
Casey Kane
Lavonda Bonnard

CC: Katie.North@alexandriava.gov
Liaison to the Parking and Traffic Board

FROM: Kathleen M. Burns, 1036 N. Pelham St.
Alexandria, VA 22304

Chair, on behalf of the BSVCA Open Space Committee
Burnskathy1036@gmail.com
Desk Phone: 703-824-1799
Cell Phone: 703-624-2097

Dear Mr. Lewis and members of the Alexandria Parking and Traffic Board,

We are writing to you about a matter of great concern to our neighborhood in the Brookville-Seminary Valley section in the West End.

Our concern is about a tentative scheduling by your board for June 27, 2022, for a public hearing on the very consequential removal of 9 parking spots on Polk Avenue. But any public details are lacking.

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Having served on the Parking Board myself, I am aware of certain basic rules, not only for the Parking and Traffic Board, but for most City boards and commissions. At the top of the list is a mandatory public hearing, and those requesting it, with the requisite "due diligence" in notifying all interested parties who may be impacted by such action.

This has not happened.

Similarly, it is generally required that public signs be posted in the neighborhoods involved in upcoming hearings, at least a month in advance.

This has not happened, so people have no way of knowing this very consequential could occur, without the mandatory input from neighbors.

The only way we tentatively knew a hearing was slated for June 27 was when I called the office of Bob Garbacz to ask the names of current members, he mentioned it to me.

The Brookville-Seminary Valley Civic Association (BSVCA) represents about 600 households. We have 10 members on our new board and the majority are people elected were not previous incumbents. They have energy, enthusiasm and an interest in the community, but it takes time and practice to learn the ropes for being part of a civic association's board.

As part of this transition, they are working to improve the internal communications within our large membership. We received our last all-member BSVCA Newsletter in conjunction with our Quarterly Meeting, held on April 30 via Zoom. While a some of the members read this newsletter online, many of our long-time community residents do not have computers or iPhones so they opted to get printed copies which were delivered in person by Block Captains.

Thus, none of the current BSVCA membership have received any written information on this proposed June 27, 2022, hearing before the Parking and Traffic Board and the complex underlying issues involved.

Similarly, the board is transitioning to a new online service, Mail Chimp, but we have not received any notifications thus far about the hearing for the before the Parking and Traffic Board, of the underlying issues.

Also, the BSVCA website is in transition with a new system. When I checked listings for BSVCA Events (on June 4), the site noted only four upcoming proposed events, for the remainder of 2022, but none had a date or any details.

This included: the Christmas Decorating Contest, the Thanksgiving Run/Walk, the Holmes Run Park Clean-up and the National Night Out.

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There is no mention on the BSVCA website of the June 27 Parking Board hearing, which is tied to a proposal by TES for a concrete sidewalk within the borders of the 5325 Polk Avenue Open Space Park. This is not a “new” issue but one which emerged in November 2021, and no information was provided to any of the local residents until April 8, 2022, with a random flyer issued by TES official Alex Carroll, with minimal information.

There does not appear to be the transparency and factual information that one would expect from a local government agency, which is doing little to inform the citizens about a proposed expenditure of taxpayer Money.

The only reason we became aware of the June 27 date was when I called Bob Garbacz, who was the long-time liaison to the Parking and Traffic Board and is currently the TES Division Chief of Traffic Engineering. I had called Bob because the Internet site only listed the names but no contact information, for members of your board. I was most grateful to him for supplying your name, Mr. Lewis, as the chair, as well as those of your colleagues. And I appreciate your ability to forward this note and subsequent correspondence to your colleagues.

As a long-time member of the BSVCA, I respectfully request that the proposed June 27 meeting be postponed until there is adequate time for the members to be notified on why this hearing was slated in the first place, before the requisite public hearing process had occurred. And that it cannot occur until the necessary mechanisms are operational and in full working order, such as the online newsletter; the provision for printed copies of it for those who request it; inclusion in the BSVCA website on the history of this issue; a listing in the Calendar of Events sections for our local papers: Alexandria TIMES, Alexandria Gazette, the West End Patch and the Washington Post METRO and/or Thursday Local Living section; and, significantly, in the City’s own E-News email service (which goes only to those who sign up for it so its distribution is limited and not automatically citywide.)

It would also give the Parking and Traffic Board members the opportunity to actually visit the contested site in person and assess what should be done. They would have time to review the essential background information tied to the proposed elimination of nine parking spots.

There has been a great deal of confusion generated by TES on solving a problem that doesn’t exist, and ignoring a practical solution that does. And they have repeatedly ignored various attempts by residents to obtain factual information

Instead of the invasive TES concrete sidewalk proposal, which could seriously destabilize the foundation of the 5325 Polk Open Space, we are fully in support of the alternative option.

That would be a striped crosswalk ---for children and adults---who wish to cross safely from the Parkside of Alexandria condominiums, which have 379 units, over to the 5324 side of Polk Avenue. The 1st option is that the crosswalk could be from the Parkside path in the Park,

Attachment 3: July 25 Traffic & Parking Board Docket for Polk Avenue

already in place, and link with the grassy median strip across the street, which the city already owns. With the 2nd option, a permeable surface could link the Parkside path to the Open Space Park drive way.

Either of these options do not damage the internal structure of the Park. They do not require massive tree removals. And instead of eliminating nine parking spots., it would more likely be only two. The space in front of 5324 Polk already has a “no parking sign from here to corner,” so there is no loss of parking there.

In using taxpayer monies, we want our officials to find efficient, effective and safe options for pedestrians and a crosswalk does that.

The difference is that a crosswalk is estimated to cost \$5,000. But the concrete sidewalk is estimated to cost \$100,000 for 250 feet. That does not include Additional monies that will be needed for drainage of water, lighting, maintenance and liability [The side walk would be City property and staff would have to shovel it every time it snowed, plus the additional liability if someone would fall on an unshoveled walk way.

Several city officials have already visited the site including City Manager Jim Parajon, #2 TES official Chris Ziemann, and several Council members and their aides.

Bob Garbacz estimated the cost would be about \$5,000, including materials and labor.

That is quite a contrast with the TES estimated of \$100,000

By way of background, I am a long-time member of the BSVCA and have been actively involved throughout the years. I also spent 8 years on the Board, including a term as president.

I do not casually submit this request to your Board to defer inclusion of our area on your June 27 hearing. I respect the work the Parking Board has done in the past and continues to do in the present. We were very grateful when we worked closely with the Board to get District 12 Parking for necessary regulations in our area. And the board and staff were equally helpful in working to set up a “private street” for the 1000 block of North Pelham because of the inability of residents to park in front of their own homes. We were already required by the City to pay for our own snow plowing each winter.

To put those two situations in context, with that of the TES efforts to remove 9 local parking spots, we need to stress that our small area is hemmed in by two multi-family complexes and the competitive parking situation that already exists. At the top of Pelham Street are the Parkside of Alexandria condominiums, with 379 units. The complex has extensive onsite parking available to their

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residents. But, at one point, the management was planning to levy a \$162 fee for a parking permit to show the driver of a car was indeed a Parkside resident. Instead, some who opposed the fee passed out a flyer, encouraging residents to come and park on Polk Avenue (or the adjoining streets of Pelham, Palmer Place, Pender Court) with the idea that 'they'll never know.'

Yes, we knew immediately.

And at the bottom of our street is the Willow Run complex with 399 units, and not enough parking on their site for their residents.

Losing NINE legal parking spots would cause huge upheaval in our neighborhood. We hope members of the Parking Board will come and look at the site for a better understanding of what this issue involves. And

It is much more than the parking problem. And I am happy to provide a guided tour of the Open Space Park

and note the potential damage that could be caused by a poorly researched TES plan, when other safer and convenient options for crossing the street are available.

I am happy to submit my comments for your public record.

And later this week, I will follow this letter to the board, requesting deferral, at this time, of the June 27 hearing, with a separate statement to provide a more detailed chronology of the conflict between a TES-imposed concrete sidewalk versus the 5325 Polk Avenue Park. This is a tangible asset for the City that was purchased in 2012 with \$1.5 million in mitigation funds from the DOD for taking six acres from the Winkler Preserve, in order to facilitate construction of the BRAC Building at #395 and Seminary Road. The City then added an additional \$400,000 in Open Space Funds for a total of \$1.9 million.

The delay in submitting the chronology today is because I need to scan various documents to be used as

Attachments for that letter.

Sincerely,

Kathleen M. Burns, chair

BSVCA Open Space Committee

Burnskathy1036@gmail.com

Desk Phone: 703-824-1799

Cell Phone: 703-624-2097

From: Gill Abernathy <aberngi@msn.com>

Sent: Wednesday, June 22, 2022 11:34 PM

Attachment 3: July 25 Traffic & Parking Board Docket for Polk Avenue

To: Emily Baker <Emily.Baker@alexandriava.gov>

Subject: FW: Polk Ave. Sidewalk Project- Oppose

This sidewalk project is a bad idea. I walk this route about 5 times a week regularly crossing the street in both daylight and after dark for many years, so I have much experience on this topic.

- a) Would have to chop down multiple mature trees, don't we need more trees, not less
- b) Would destabilize the steep hill, per Rod Simmons, Natural Resources Manager, why create a problem that does not currently exist?
- c) Irony- would have to pull up a sign saying "Native Plant Conservation Zone, Watershed Protection Zone" to pave over it
- d) Don't we want more ground to absorb water coming down that steep hill, instead of more concrete?
- e) There already IS a sidewalk, just on the other side of the street

This street is a lightly traveled, narrow side street- it is not dangerous to cross.

The Polk Ave Park is wonderfully unspoiled and has been a huge gift during the stress of covid- please don't pave over and destabilize it.

Thank you,

Gill Abernathy

1013 N. Terrill St.

From: Ashley Dalton <ashley.lynn.dalton@gmail.com>

Sent: Tuesday, July 12, 2022 3:09 PM

To: Jim Parajon <jim.parajon@alexandriava.gov>; Justin Wilson <justin.wilson@alexandriava.gov>

Subject: [EXTERNAL]Polk Ave Sidewalk project

Mayor Wilson and City Manager Parajon,

First, I want to thank you both for your continued engagement with our neighborhood, the Brookville Seminary Valley Civic Association (BSVCA), and its residents. You've each met with individuals, groups, or our neighborhood recently, and we appreciate the opportunity to directly engage with our City officials. Having direct access to City leadership is one of the many great things about our city.

Second, it has come to my attention that one of our members, who has been actively advocating against the Polk Avenue Sidewalk near 5325 Polk/Polk Park, has been meeting with various elected and appointed City officials. I want to make clear that at this stage, neither the BSVCA Board nor its membership have taken an official position on this project. Thus, any opposition to this project is not on behalf of the BSVCA board or its members, but on an individual basis.

I emailed our former City Manager, City Council, etc., about the project late last year on behalf of the BSVCA Board, requesting that our neighborhood be involved and engaged in the project as it unfolded. We have had ongoing and direct access to City staff, including Alex Carroll and Chris Ziemann, as plans emerged. In my personal view, they have been very forthcoming in their time, transparency, and willingness to work with our neighborhood, and have even made some changes incorporating our feedback. I realize that there are two (or more!) sides to any issue, and we have neighbors on either side, or even neutral, which is why so far we have not chosen to take any action for or in opposition to this project. Any claims otherwise are inaccurate. I just wanted to make sure that you are both aware, and to give credit to City staff for being so approachable and transparent on this project and other

Attachment 3: July 25 Traffic & Parking Board Docket for Polk Avenue

recent ongoing concerns in our neighborhood. While there are always areas for improvement in community engagement, at least on this particular project, I do not find that to be a concern. In fact, as you may be aware, we are having a neighborhood meeting with City staff tomorrow, about this project.

We have many other community and pedestrian safety issues of greater concern to our neighborhood besides this sidewalk. I want to be sure that we maintain a good working relationship with City staff and representatives, as a board and neighborhood, to tackle those issues together.

Thank you again, and don't hesitate to call or reach out if you wish to discuss anything further. I look forward to hopefully seeing you at our National Night Out event at Polk Elementary if you are making the rounds.

Ashley Dalton
BSVCA President
301.437.0195

From: Dale Carson <dale2wheel@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, July 13, 2022 5:43 PM
To: Alexandria Carroll <Alexandria.Carroll@alexandriava.gov>
Subject: Re: [EXTERNAL]Polk Avenue Sidewalk Safe Routes to School Project

Thank you for clarifying on the drainage and the trees. It is better now, with I am estimating only about 200 square feet of non-permeable surface being added and keeping the largest tree. Still, losing the four trees is unfortunate.

Since you brought up the Hammond schoolchildren, many of them don't even use the existing sidewalks on Polk, as they just meander down the middle of the street playing games cutting over and back chasing each other.

They could cross at the crosswalk at Pegram, but they don't. They turn the corner then start wandering across the street to eventually turn left to go down N Pelham. Some of them don't even use the sidewalk on the much busier N Pegram until a vehicle comes along. Very few if any middle schoolchildren are going to use the new sidewalk on the north side of Polk. They will continue to play and/or cut diagonally over the shortest route, just as they do today. Using them to justify this is wishful thinking at best, as these are the same middle schoolchildren that I see riding scooters in circles on the street, ignoring stop signs and riding against traffic flow.

I frequently walk my neighborhood and I have never had an issue crossing Polk at the intersection with Palmer Place. I would think painting a crosswalk there and near the Polk and N. Pelham St. corner would be a good first step before spending \$100k on a new sidewalk that eliminates parking and trees.

In the end this will not impact me much outside of the wasted tax dollars. I will likely have to get used to vehicles being parked in front of my neighbor's house. Hopefully they will not block the visibility when leaving our driveways.

Dale.

On 7/13/2022 2:52 PM, Alexandria Carroll wrote:

Attachment 3: July 25 Traffic & Parking Board Docket for Polk Avenue

Good Afternoon Dale,

Thank you for your message - I appreciate you taking the time to share your feedback.

Based on staff's observations, many residents, including schoolchildren, walk on the north side of Polk Ave and either have to cross the street to continue on the sidewalk, or walk in the street. Both Polk Elementary School and Hammond Middle School have echoed the need for a sidewalk here, and staff have heard comments from several residents who want a sidewalk so they don't have to be exposed to traffic unnecessarily.

Please note, over 80 percent of the sidewalk would be built on the existing street footprint. As a result, there are no significant impacts expected for drainage or runoff. The City did also revise the draft concept to reduce the impact to trees from 5 trees (including an 18" diameter tree) to 4 trees (ranging from 3"-12" in diameter). You can see the revised plan here:

<https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.alexandriava.gov%2Ftransportation-planning%2Fproject%2Fpolk-avenue-sidewalk-safe-routes-to-school-project&data=05%7C01%7CAlexandria.Carroll%40alexandriava.gov%7C91b8b4e8d0934f6c171008da6518a54d%7Cfeaa9b3143754aeeadccc76ad32a890b%7C0%7C0%7C637933453771389986%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWljiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzliLCJBTiI6IjEhaWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C&sdata=qlpmpuw5YYoA5IlgGTuuKyc%2FRYGHMrD6Q8YylsGfZDbI%3D&reserveid=0>

Thank you again for reaching out to share your comments, and have a great day.

Alex Carroll

(she/her)

Complete Streets Program Manager

Department of Transportation & Environmental Services

City of Alexandria | 301 King Street Room 3600 | Alexandria, VA 22314

alexandria.carroll@alexandriava.gov

-----Original Message-----

From: Dale Carson <dale2wheel@gmail.com>

Sent: Tuesday, July 12, 2022 4:12 PM

To: Alexandria Carroll <Alexandria.Carroll@alexandriava.gov>

Subject: [EXTERNAL]Polk Avenue Sidewalk Safe Routes to School Project

I would think the number of Polk elementary school kids that would take advantage of this new sidewalk to no longer have to cross Polk away from the crossing guard is very small. Usually parents or guardians walk the elementary kids up to the crossing guard as well. If the city has researched or even made a good faith estimate of the numbers of elementary kids what would benefit from this new sidewalk, that would be a good place to start before spending our taxpayer dollars on it.

I just don't think the costs in tax dollars, lost trees, additional run-off into Holmes Run and lost parking spaces is worth the benefit in this case.

Thank you for considering my comments,

Attachment 3: July 25 Traffic & Parking Board Docket for Polk Avenue

Dale Carson

5205 Polk Ave

dale2wheel@gmail.com

From: Kenneth Peyton <ken956@comcast.net>
Sent: Wednesday, July 13, 2022 8:32 PM
To: Alexandria Carroll <Alexandria.Carroll@alexandriava.gov>
Subject: RE: Polk Avenue Sidewalk Safe Routes to School Project

Hi Alex,

First let me say I agree with the sidewalk. Second, I think the whole tree issue is a red herring brought up by a few vocal neighbors who want to oppose the project.

Can I add background about parking? I live on Richenbacher. There was growing concern about street parking about 20 years ago. The neighborhood petitioned the city to make a neighborhood zone and the people at the apartments and in Brookville objected because they need street parking. The demand for parking is still growing judging by how cars line the streets more than they used to.

A few years ago a lady knocked on my door and asked if she could park in my driveway. Another winter about ten years ago one of the residents asked to park on my driveway pad that I had shoveled. I widened my driveway about ten years ago partly because people were parking so close to the edges that it was difficult to back out safely. When my neighbor on the Paxton side goes away for a weekend, he always parks an extra car in front of his house, so the spot will be available when he returns.

I don't like the loss of nine parking spaces anywhere in the neighborhood and hope we aren't losing them due to a vocal minority. Can the city somehow go ahead and cut down some trees and keep parking spaces? I'm seconding what the gentleman from Palmer said in this evening's meeting about how cars fill up the streets along Palmer.

Ken Peyton, Alexandria, VA

On 07/13/2022 2:46 PM Alexandria Carroll <alexandria.carroll@alexandriava.gov> wrote:

Good Afternoon Kenneth,

Thank you for your message. I appreciate you reaching out to share your feedback.

In order to preserve parking, the sidewalk would have to be built almost entirely outside the existing footprint of the street, closer to the park area. This would result in greater loss of trees, which we have also heard is a community concern. As in any project, staff considers the various needs and concerns and tries to present a balanced proposal that meets the goals of the project and minimizes impacts.

There are about 19 on-street parking spaces on this block, with one home that has a private driveway. Our observations have shown that even with the removal of nine spaces, there will be sufficient parking to meet demand.

Attachment 3: July 25 Traffic & Parking Board Docket for Polk Avenue

Thank you again for taking the time to share your comments, and have a nice day.

Alex Carroll
(she/her)
Complete Streets Program Manager
Department of Transportation & Environmental Services
City of Alexandria | 301 King Street Room 3600 | Alexandria, VA 22314
alexandria.carroll@alexandriava.gov

From: Kenneth Peyton <ken956@comcast.net>
Sent: Friday, July 08, 2022 7:25 PM
To: Alexandria Carroll <Alexandria.Carroll@alexandriava.gov>
Subject: re: Polk Avenue Sidewalk Safe Routes to School Project

If you build the sidewalk can you widen the space so we keep street parking which is becoming scarce in this area?

From: Alexandria Carroll
Sent: Thursday, July 14, 2022 4:44 PM
To: Jeremy Hogg <jeremyhogg@gmail.com>
Cc: Melanie Hogg <melanie.m.hogg@gmail.com>; Justin Wilson <justin.wilson@alexandriava.gov>; Hillary Orr <Hillary.Orr@alexandriava.gov>
Subject: RE: [EXTERNAL]Polk Sidewalk Project - Feedback from Family Directly Across the Street

Hi Jeremy,

Thanks for your message, and thank you for joining the meeting last night. I appreciate you taking the time to share your input and contribute to a productive, thoughtful discussion.

I do understand your concern about parking, but I'm afraid installing the sidewalk closer to the park to preserve parking is not a viable option. Building further into the park area would have an even greater impact on trees and the natural space, and this would not be acceptable to the City's Department of Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities, who is a partner in this project. Doing so would also require regrading the existing paths and installing a retaining wall instead of a simple curb, which would significantly impact project costs and exceed the project budget.

One item that I mentioned in the presentation yesterday but did not really make its way into the group discussion was the request for crosswalks at Polk Avenue and Palmer Place. I mentioned that we could consider crosswalks as a supplemental treatment. However, it would require up to six additional on-street parking spaces on Polk Avenue to be removed to ensure sufficient sightlines for people crossing. Given the concern you and a few others have expressed about the proposed reduction in parking, crosswalk treatments are something we could omit from our recommendation to minimize overall impacts to parking. Again, we are trying to provide a plan that balances all the various needs and concerns as much as is feasible.

In terms of drainage features, we can continue to work through the details of this as the design is finalized.

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As a reminder, there will be an additional opportunity to weigh in on this project at the [Traffic & Parking Board Public Hearing](#) on July 25. If you wish to speak during the public hearing, please email Alex.Block@alexandriava.gov in advance of the meeting.

Thank you again for your continued engagement, and have a nice evening.

Alex Carroll
(she/her)
Complete Streets Program Manager
Department of Transportation & Environmental Services
City of Alexandria | 301 King Street Room 3600 | Alexandria, VA 22314
alexandria.carroll@alexandriava.gov

From: Jeremy Hogg <jeremyhogg@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, July 14, 2022 8:32 AM
To: Alexandria Carroll <Alexandria.Carroll@alexandriava.gov>
Cc: Melanie Hogg <melanie.m.hogg@gmail.com>; Justin Wilson <justin.wilson@alexandriava.gov>
Subject: Re: [EXTERNAL]Polk Sidewalk Project - Feedback from Family Directly Across the Street

Hi Alex,

Thanks for attending yesterday evening. I know this a contentious topic and I commend your ability to stay composed among the vocal members of our community.

Mayor Wilson - thank you also for making the time to come out to review this project earlier this week.

I wanted to reiterate two things that were brought up yesterday evening:

1. The City should be able to preserve parking as part of this plan. Please note that community members come and park along that side of the road adjacent to the park to use the space. Users of the street parking that live here should *NOT* be negatively affected by this project and there should be parking retained for users of the park. There are many places in the City with much tighter parking situations with parking on both sides of the road (i.e. Del Ray) and it's critical the City figures out a way to maintain as much parking as possible along the park. Cutting 2 to 3' into the slope will not significantly change the cost of the project, but does eliminate parking in the current plan.
2. The City also should look at how drainage coming off of the sloped park area will be dealt with. While the run off will not significantly increase from this project, the plan does create a small retaining wall (even if only 1-2' high) that will trap water behind it if not properly dealt with. This could be addressed through a number of methods, but a recommendation could be a small swale behind the wall with stone and filter fabric and various drainage points that allow the water to make its way out to the curb. If not addressed, you will have debris and silt that will end up on the sidewalk in major storms. This same debris and silt ends up in the road now because there is no solution for this.

Thank you again - I look forward to seeing a plan that addresses the loss in parking and drainage concerns.

Attachment 3: July 25 Traffic & Parking Board Docket for Polk Avenue

Regards,
Jeremy

On Tue, Jul 5, 2022 at 1:14 PM Alexandria Carroll <Alexandria.Carroll@alexandriava.gov> wrote:
Good Afternoon Jeremy and Melanie,

Thank you so much for taking the time to share your feedback. It is greatly appreciated. I apologize for the delayed reply – I was out for several days and am catching up on emails. Thank you for your patience.

I am glad to hear you are supportive of increasing pedestrian safety and access in the neighborhood, and I understand that parking loss is almost always a concern.

Per the City's [Complete Streets Design Guidelines](#), new sidewalks are typically 6' at a minimum. 5' is permitted if the sidewalk is a residential retrofit. In this case, the proposed sidewalk is already 5'. That said, staff can consider whether a narrower sidewalk is appropriate and whether it would make any meaningful difference in the impact to parking spaces and/or trees.

I have noted your interest in installing the sidewalk further back, closer to the park, to preserve parking. I should note that there has been concern raised by some about the proximity of the sidewalk to the park and the proposed removal of trees. As in any project, staff will consider the various needs and concerns and try to present a balanced proposal that meets the goals of the project and minimizes impacts.

Thank you again for reaching out, and have a nice day.

Alex Carroll
(she/her)
Complete Streets Program Manager
Department of Transportation & Environmental Services
City of Alexandria | 301 King Street Room 3600 | Alexandria, VA 22314
alexandria.carroll@alexandriava.gov

From: Jeremy Hogg <jeremyhogg@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, June 22, 2022 9:55 AM
To: Alexandria Carroll <Alexandria.Carroll@alexandriava.gov>
Cc: Melanie Hogg <melanie.m.hogg@gmail.com>
Subject: [EXTERNAL]Polk Sidewalk Project - Feedback from Family Directly Across the Street

Hi Alexandria,

My name is Jeremy Hogg and my wife and I are the residents that made the original request to the City to review a sidewalk across the street from our home. We have been at 5324 Polk Ave for 5 1/2 years and residents of the west end for 15 years. We also lived at Parkside for about 5 of those years.

Over the years we have witnessed close calls at the corner of our home. Residents from Parkside and others cross at that corner and oftentimes motorists are travelling too fast resulting in a dangerous combination. The gate that provides access from Parkside to Polk Ave is used daily and has been great to encourage walking to school and access to the Park for those residents for years. The sidewalk will get people off the road and is a common sense project that improves accessibility and

Attachment 3: July 25 Traffic & Parking Board Docket for Polk Avenue

safety in the neighborhood. It was great to have our City manager out last month to review this situation (my wife attended) and I know we also have have a session coming up with City officials and the BSVCA board in the next few weeks (I'm on Board there as well).

As one of the principal stakeholders in the project, and the family that will be most affected, we are supportive of this project because it provides safe access on that side of the street. **With that said, we would request that the City please review the plan to remove 9 spaces and come up with alternate options. How do you balance the need for safety without elimination of 9 spaces?**

Options to consider:

1. Does the sidewalk need to be 5' wide? The sidewalk in front of our home is less than 4' and the sidewalk at the townhomes is about 3' 6".
2. Can the City look at cutting into the slope of the hill slightly more to prevent removal of all these spaces? This would cause a small retaining wall, but may mitigate the elimination of all the spaces.
3. The road widens just past the park entrance, so could parking be maintained in that area heading east of the Polk park entrance?

Parking is at a premium in our neighborhood. We also have many people that park their cars illegally on the street (we call 411 regularly (weekly) to deal with this). I would ask that we consider the above options in the final planning to ensure we maximize the parking while ensuring safe access.

If you have any questions I'd be happy to chat. As a trained civil engineer, I'm confident we can find a solution that balances parking and improves safety in the neighborhood. If possible, would you mind providing this email to others involved in the planning process at the City?

Thank you,

--

Jeremy Hogg
Alexandria, VA 22304
C: 571-344-4262

T&ES' proposed, city-funded sidewalk at 5325 Polk to connect to Parkside condominiums' private, haphazardly-built, DIY-designed, locked-and-gated path ending at Pelham to an existing public sidewalk a block away can best be described as (1) tone-deaf to the community's parking concerns, and (2) environmentally inept.

Two words describe the proposed sidewalk project: PATHetic and PATHological (puns intended).

PATHetic: Another, less expensive, less invasive way to improve pedestrian safety would be to build a minimal amount of sidewalk beginning at the Parkside path, remove only two parking spaces, and mark a crosswalk mid-block from the entrance to the 5325 park to the sidewalk on the opposite side of Polk. Instead of considering this option, the crosswalk concept was rejected because it would be located mid-block rather than at an intersection. Why? Go figure.... It's certainly not, as explained by staff, that mid-block crosswalks are not condoned by the city. Many examples exist to disprove that explication. Really...?

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PATHological: This process has avoided transparency and circumvented existing protocols for creating new neighborhood sidewalks. The “gap” was first identified in a VDOT “Safe Routes to School” assessment. A couple of years later, a VDOT assessment of likely users identified approximately six school-age children on Pelham, who potentially would need to cross the street if attending Polk Elementary. VDOT funded a walk audit for Polk School... “but did not play any role in development of infrastructure recommendations” and the city “has no obligation to VDOT to implement this sidewalk project,” says T&ES.

When asked for data analytics about school children’s likely use of the sidewalk, T&ES had none. When 2016 VDOT data were cited by a questioner, the answer was that more than just Polk students would use the sidewalk - also adults and students going to other nearby schools. No data on that have been collected, either.

While the city’s Neighborhood Sidewalk Program sets forth extensive requirements and constraints for seeking a new neighborhood sidewalk project, the 5325 proposal avoids meeting them. Why? “It’s part of Safe Routes to School,” says T&ES. Isn’t that a VDOT program? Which trumps? Why? Whichever set of criteria is more convenient? Are six Polk students (as of 2016) enough? They will have to cross the street somewhere, admittedly. Polk School IS on the other side.

Says T&ES: “The City owns and maintains its own roadways,” yet there is no plan or commitments for maintaining the safety of the new sidewalk - expressly snow and ice removal and lighting. There are no neighbors whose property abuts the sidewalk.

Further, T&ES says that existing street right of way will be used for the new sidewalk, 82% of which will not add impervious surface. Question: will any of that other 18% - even tiny percentage - be built on 5325 Polk park property? If so, the City’s purchase agreement requires it to remit funding for the park to its donor, as stipulated at the time of the purchase grant. The city attorney’s opinion may be warranted prior to proceeding.

Carol L. James
1000 N. Vail Street
Alexandria, VA
July 17, 2022

From: burnskathy1036@gmail.com <burnskathy1036@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, July 17, 2022 12:27 PM
To: Justin Wilson <justin.wilson@alexandriava.gov>; Jim Parajon <jim.parajon@alexandriava.gov>
Cc: Christopher Ziemann <christopher.ziemann@alexandriava.gov>; Alexandria Carroll <Alexandria.Carroll@alexandriava.gov>
Subject: [EXTERNAL]no time given for today's TES deadline for Comments. Please consider extending it. 5325 Polk
Importance: High

IF THERE IS NO EXTENSION FOR TODAY’S DEADLINE FOR THE TES Comment Period, CONSIDER THIS MY SUBMISSION.

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July 17, 2022

Dear Alex and Chris,

I had no idea that TES had rushed to setting a Comment Period on 5325 Polk for July 17, 2022 until a neighbor mentioned it at 6 p.m. yesterday. It seems that moments after the July 13 “listening session,” Ms. Carroll contacted the Traffic and Parking Board to get things rolling.

There was no follow up notice to those who had tuned in to the ZOOM “listening session” on July 13. Similarly, there was another apparent violation of standard procedures for governmental public meetings, since no one was required to sign in (except for the Zoom call) and so there is no formal record on attendance for the Public Record, which would normally include a person’s name, address and email.

Having served on the Parking Board myself, I know it is highly unusual to allow for only two business days for a comment period on something of such great significance for the neighborhood.

Put this announcement on the comment period on E-News. Most people do not visit the TES website with regularity.

And my colleague who saw the notice said **no deadline time was given.**

That was a terrible oversight for a public announcement and should be corrected immediately on the TES website.. Put it on Facebook and other social media, presuming you really do want to address an interested audience attracting residents with diverse opinions and viewpoints, and not only the TES Party Line talking points. Also note that the meeting was recorded and let the public know when they can access that data orally, as well as via a written transcript from that tape, as part of mandatory Public Outreach.

Also notify BSVCA President Ashley Dalton (Ashley.lynn.dalton@gmail.com) to put the correction on the BSVCA website for her organization, and notification that the meeting was recorded, and how one can access that orally and when a transcript will be available. Notification of the correction and the tape and written transcript should also be immediately provided to the Federation of Civic Associations and to the West End Coalition of Civic Associations. You can do that through Ms. Carter Flemming, who is co-chair of both groups (carterflemming@gmail.com)

As the Washington Post so aptly notes on its masthead: “*Democracy dies in darkness.*” TES officials plus the City’s elected officials and the City Manager can shine some light on the

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missing TES information as part of the usually essential Public Outreach process.

I respectfully also suggest that the **comment period be extended for at least two weeks**, which had been the usual time frame for most government agencies (not just locally, but regionally, statewide and federally when seeking comments. Even the House of Representatives gives 10 business days for people to amend or submit their remarks, following public hearings.)

I am sure there are many interested parties in this 5325 Park vs TES sidewalk controversy, including myself, who were not aware of the brief Comment Period and thus would be cut out of the process.

Below I note, I have not had the proverbial “spare minute to dash off any Comments for TES since 6 pm last night. I am very good at Time Management, but there are limits to having only 24 hours a day!

In my personal time frame since the end of TES on Wednesday, July 13 ‘listening session:”

After the July 13 hearing ended at 8:30 pm, I took some brief notes, had dinner at 9:30 pm, and then typed up my notes til midnight (unaware of the rapidly approaching Comment deadline.

On Thursday, I spent the major part of my time at a funeral in upper Maryland and returned home late in the day, to tackle my upcoming Friday tasks. That included teaching my first in-person class for GMU where I had not actually been on campus since the beginning of the Pandemic in early March 2020.

For the remainder of Friday afternoon and evening, I worked on academic notes for the class I will teach on Monday, July 18 at GMU and sent email updates to my students.

For the weekend, I went with my daughter to pick up the wedding dress she’ll wear on Aug. 20 and then to another location to get my dress. Ran errands and updated notes for my Monday, July 18 GMU classes I am teaching.

So I haven’t been sitting idly by, with little time to zip out my TES Comments for the “mystery” deadline.

Still part of this weekend, on Saturday evening about 6 pm

I dropped off some things for a sick friend who surprised me with the unexpected new of the rapidly looming TES deadline----and a sense of horror engulfed me ---about being shut-out of the TES Comment Period, because of poor Public Outreach processes by the agency.

And the weekend isn’t over yet----I ordered ticket for a 2 pm play at ARENA stage a year ago for TODAY.

Finding out that in less than 24 hours, the TES deadline would plunk down on all of us was one of the most upsetting

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of moments of living in Alexandria for a long time. At this late date, I obviously can't change the tickets and I would lose the money. That's a poor choice.

And looking ahead to a very demanding week of July 18-23, I find little "open time" to dash off the TES comments by whenever the deadline is today.

On July 18, I have the day at GMU for classes. On July 19 and July 20, my husband has two "significant surgeries" with outcome unknown at present or how long the hospitalization will be.

I NEED AND EXTENSION OF THIS COMMENT PERIOD, and so do many others on the West End who just found out about the deadline and can't drop everything to meet the deadline, whenever it is, because of poor Public Outreach policies by TES and the City.

And, if I can't get it, please submit this document for the TES Public Record, since this is the only time they would have acknowledged comments from KMS and surrounding Palmer Place, Pender Court, Pegram and Richenbacher who oppose the TES plan as it is currently written and does not reflect any requested changes from neighborhood input.

And I/we don't need just a few hours, but we need at least a week. TES and the City officials need a full and fair opportunity to voice concerns from residents impacted by this \$100,000 sidewalk.

Ms. Carrol and Chris Ziemann have continue to ignore the historical, scientific, ethical and legal aspects of this parcel of ground, This is not the mandatory "due diligence" but bullying against residents and taxpayers.

Since the year 2000, many area residents were part of a coalition of 4 large West End civic associations that battled developers and some City staff for 13 years to ward off attempts to turn the pristine park into multi-family units ranging from 17 to 42 units, and permanently damage not only the Park for surrounding houses, with expected water seepage problems underground to our foundations.

We urge TES and the City's elected officials to **take a serious look at the LEGAL Aspects of 5325 Polk Park**, related to the creation, protection and preservation of this Park, instead of the repeated mantra "right of way" as the sole justification for this sidewalk, as part TES's unlimited powers in creating policies that are not subject to impartial review and input.

Start your immediate search with the City's own extensive research, documentation and vote on this property. It is not merely a pile of dirt and a few hapless trees.

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On Dec. 4, 2012, the City’s Planning Commission voted unanimously [Docket Item 12, Planning Hearing Commission, City Charter Section 9-06. Case #2012—0003, 5325 Polk.]

According to an Alexandria attorney and expert on land use management and city regulations, he notes from the above document that the citation on PDF page 20, is

“a letter from Duke Realty to City Manager, “approved” by the City Attorney and voted on by the Planning Commission when it authorized the purchase. So it is binding. The letter also says that the City is required to show it used the money (\$1.9 million) for the express purpose (open space) by providing a copy of the executed purchase agreement or deed of conveyance ‘which contains the appropriate language restricting the use of the property for open space in perpetuity.’”

Adds the legal expert, “the issue boils down to whether [TES] plans are inconsistent with open space requirements. If it is inconsistent, [the City] cannot do it without returning the property.

In other words, the deed citation that the property must be for the ‘exclusive use’ as Open Space. “

We neighbors to 5325 Polk continue to wonder why City elected officials such as the Mayor and Council members, who have visited this fragile environmental site, continue to ignore a strong request for a striped crosswalk FROM THE PATH/DRIVEWAY UP TO THE TOP OF THE HILL? We are their constituents. This is NOT at the Parkside entrance but half way down, on a flatter part of the street, and a significant distance from the curve at Pelham/Polk. City Manager Parajon didn’t give any assessment to the Crosswalk in the middle of the block, where the street is much flatter, and the access could use the basic driveway/path to the top.

The City can’t arbitrarily rule out crosswalks in the middle of the block since it already has so many, just based on a random survey.

It is time for TES and the City to **“PUT UP OR SHUT UP”** and allow to do a professional survey of the Pros and Cons of the site in the middle of the block. There is no extra cost since this is part of his job. This striped crosswalk with appropriate signage could easily connect to the city-owned Median strip to cross Polk Avenue. Lately, we have seen a profusion of new and updated crosswalks in our part of town. marked by the Walking Pedestrian Signs, in bright colors.

And before we taxpayers **“SHOW YOU THE MONEY”** for the \$100,000+plus sidewalk (Carroll said it would not include any money for the drainage grids on a street where the curbs would be torn up,

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and Parks and Rec Director said there would be ‘no extra money’ to maintain the City-owned sidewalk and do the snow shoveling etc. No surprise there since the Park has had minimal maintenance if its 10 years>0

City Manager Parajon, when he visited in May, noted the “speeding school buses” and promised ‘to do something about that.’ But nothing happened.

Make up for lost time. Cut speed there in the lead up to 5325 Polk and uphill to Pelham at to 15 mph as part of the School Zone as you’ve done on Pegram and Polk.

Parajon also promised “Curved Road Ahead” signs, and nothing happened. Do it now, as you did on Pegram near Polk, as well as other places in Alexandria.

the City spent a lot of money on the large Speed Monitoring devices on Pegram. Why not put that speed measuring either on going uphill on Pelham or Polk?

Whatever they cost, it would be a lot less than the \$100,000 sidewalk that does ZERO as a promised “safety enhancement” but with no documentation.

The “Routes to Schools” features lots of crosswalks in it plans, based on VDOT materials from 2014 and 2016

When the TES July 13 meeting ended meeting at 8:30 pm, I do not recall Ms. Carroll flashing up on the screen that “Comment Period will end at midnight on July 17” only 4 days later, or only two business days later. She merely gave her email address, and did not include that of Chris Ziemann, her supervisor, whom I assume would have to approve any such comments. Nor did she give the email for Yon Lambert, who would also have to approve not only any statements put forth by Ms. Carroll on 5325 Polk, but is also given some magical power to override any decision made in the future by what we thought was an independent Traffic and Parking Board.

Let me add that at the July 13 there was the perception of a ‘stacked deck’ in the audience. As residents, we want our governmental forums to exude transparency, fact-based information and a sense of accountability by those representing the City and its agencies.

At the July 13 ‘listening session,’ there were only 25 people in attendance, and 8 of them were City employees, and this was part of their job to attend. These were not neutral observers, but active voting participants in what TES should and would do.

Let me also return to the extraordinarily abrupt and limited TES Comment Period of 2 business days plus 2 weekend days.

There is no perceived urgency in rushing this decision through, except on the part of TES. I could understand if a gaping Sink Hole suddenly

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opened up on Polk and demanded an immediate repair, or if any hurricane crushingly roared through, and TES needed to help. But that is not the case.

Unfortunately, it leads residents to wonder if TES is again hurrying to turn the proposed sidewalk into a “done deal,” and not lose outside funding.

We saw the TES Role Model foreshadowing earlier, with the very debacle on Seminary Road. The ‘prompt’ for such TES action was a State offer of significant money for a sidewalk near the Episcopal Seminary. The City pushed it through to the 4-3 vote, and on the very next day, it went to the top of the list for TES work projects. And then, ironically, the major funding from needed repairs for Holmes Run Park disappeared, and was shifted to Seminary Road [and this was verified by City employees.]

And so did the money from a Virginia State Grant. And the sidewalk has never been built and people walk in the streets, in this tiny stripped off area.[See Alexandria Times article, “Transparency Needed in grant funding,” by Frank Putzu, January 7, 2021]

It was also disheartening to hear from those familiar with the usual Parking and Transportation Board processes that TES and the City have scrubbed the usual Public Hearing format. In the past, there was a notification period of 2 weeks to 4 weeks, with diverse and extensive Outreach efforts. Those standing rules seemed to be non-existent for July 13. One glaring oversight was that the were no posted signs at in front of 5325 Polk----the site of the TES controversy----both at the Parkside path entrance and along the driveway/path to the top, where users and interested parties would see them. That’s important since the main users by volume of any sidewalk would be from the 378 Parkside condo units, and this includes a preponderance of adults, and a small number of children.

It does include a significant number of parents with baby carriages, who struggle to come down that steeply sloped path to Polk.

And I understand there is no effort by TES to currently to post signs in front of the two areas of heavy traffic from Parkside (via their own residential path from the gated community) or the to correct that mistake ahead of the proposed July 25 hearing.

Why is that? Is the goal to make sure as few people as possible are aware of this controversy? Are you minimizing the usual requirements for Public Outreach? Is it simply an oversight by someone in TES who made a mistake and forgot to include it? Or is it deliberate.

There is a shifting dynamic on why TES has so vigorously pursued this sidewalk for years, only acknowledging one point of view, and adamant refusing any other aspects. Ms. Carroll made that abundantly clear in her remarks July 13 when she rebuffed engineer and resident of 5324 Polk, Jeremy Hogg, who revealed to the audience he had already had several private discussions

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with her on the dire impact of removing 9 street parking sites. She dismissively noted she had spent “15 minutes” inspecting the site, and found the loss of 9 parking spots for tax-paying residents would be a ‘minor inconvenience.’ Is she crazy?

The timing of Ms. Carroll’s remarks on July 13 were even more sobering, since the next day TES posted signs for repaving Richenbacher, from Van Dorn up to Pickett, warning residents on either side of the street, in townhouses, apartments and single family homes, NOT to park on that street. This will cause chaos as the residents seek desperately needed parking on adjacent streets, where signs are also posted (but we didn’t get any explanatory letters as did those living on Richenbacher.” The upended Richenbacher residents will search out parking in our already very limited spaces. This includes the 92 KMS townhouse units on Van Dorn, Vale, Terrill, Pelham and Richenbacher itself. KMS units have NO driveways.

Kathleen Burns,
1036 N. Pelham St.
ALX, VA 22304

Desk Phone: (703) 824-1799

Cell Phone: (703) 624-2097

From: burnskathy1036@gmail.com <burnskathy1036@gmail.com>

Sent: Sunday, July 17, 2022 10:05 PM

To: Alexandria Carroll <Alexandria.Carroll@alexandriava.gov>; Christopher Ziemann <christopher.ziemann@alexandriava.gov>

Cc: Justin Wilson <justin.wilson@alexandriava.gov>; Jim Parajon <jim.parajon@alexandriava.gov>

Subject: [EXTERNAL]submissions for TES Comment period

Importance: High

Dear Ms. Carroll,

I would like this item below to be part of the TES submission for Public Comments / Public Record regarding the dispute between 5325 Polk Open Space Park versus TES sidewalk.

It is a Letter to the Editor, written by Kathy Burns, and titled “Your Views: Time to Shift Priorities.”

I have also included a Letter to the Editor by Carol James, titled “Don’t Pave Our Park,” which was published in the Alexandria TIMES on April 21, 2022. As members of the BSVCA Open Space Committee, we fully support the comments by Ms. James in her article. Other Committee members include: Shirley Downs, Dick Burris, Michael Moss, BJ Sullivan, Kathy Burns and Patrick Layman

Earlier today, I sent a longer statement to you and Chris Zeimann, which I would also like to be included in the TES Comments/Public Record.

I had written to you this morning since no deadline was listed for submissions on July 17. But I never heard anything back from you and I saw Ziemann was out of town.

So I am presuming the deadline is midnight on July 17. One wonders at the “Rush Job,” since there is no perceived urgency in dealing with this issue before there is a more

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complete factual report, including the Pros and Cons for the sidewalk, versus the documented risks for the park from any construction along the foundational border.

A blanket justification by the TES magical power of “right-of-way” is not the same as a “due diligence” investigation by the City, that is neutral and transparent.

As also noted earlier today, I find it very odd that the Public would be given only 2 weekdays and 2 weekend days to provide comments on such an important and controversial issue regarding the TES stance. Essential to the upcoming Traffic and Parking Board hearing are Public Notice signs posted at 5325 Polk, at the Parkside Path entrance to Polk Street, and at the Driveway/Path to the top of the Park in the middle of that long stretch of the Open Space Park. I don't know if those two areas were part of your earlier site visit. It was highly unusual such signs were not in place for the July 13 meeting, since the major users of any TES street crossing options would be adult and youth living in the 379 residents of Parkside currently. They are your target audience and they were overlooked.

The posted signs should have been mandatory as they have for majority of Public Hearings on land use management in the past. Please correct that oversight for the July 25 session.

Sincerely,
Kathy Burns, chair, BSVCA Open Space Committee.

LINK: <https://alextimes.com/2022/07/your-views-time-to-shift-priorities/>

Letter to the Editor

Your Views: Time to Shift Priorities

Published in Alexandria TIMES, 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

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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

Facebooktwittermailinstagram

Kathleen Burns,

Desk Phone: (703) 824-1799

Cell Phone: (703) 624-2097

[Note: Link to above-referenced letter to the editor, titled “Don’t Pave Our Park” is available here: <https://alextimes.com/2022/04/your-views-dont-pave-our-park/>]