

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: AUGUST 18, 2015

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: MARK B. JINKS, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: NOVA PARKS PROPOSAL TO ACQUIRE 517 PRINCE STREET

I am forwarding to you a proposal that the City has received from the Northern Virginia Regional Parks Authority ("NOVA Parks") regarding their proposed acquisition of the historic property at 517 Prince Street. NOVA Parks has negotiated an option to purchase this property, which is one of the most original 18th century houses in Alexandria. They are pairing this for financial reasons as an element of their request for a 30 year lease on the Cameron Run Regional Park property. The proposal is detailed more specifically in the attached memo from NOVA Parks Executive Director Paul Gilbert.

In response to comments made by members of the community and the Park and Recreation Commission last spring, NOVA Parks has explored non-NOVA alternative uses of the Cameron Run Regional Park and prepared preliminary costs associated with those uses, should the City decide to provide alternative recreational facilities. I have requested and received more details behind the cost analysis.

Staff is currently reviewing this proposal along with the cost estimates. We will be developing a community outreach strategy for the fall to discuss the merits of the proposal with the community and NOVA Parks. It should be noted that the structure of this proposal is malleable to some degree. For example, staff has already raised the possibility of historic preservation easements (interior and exterior) and open space easements for the 517 Prince Street property with NOVA Parks.

Attachment I: NOVA Memo in Regard to 517 Prince Street/Cameron Run Regional Park

Attachment II: 517 Prince Street Brochure

Attachment III: NOVA Memo Regarding Potential Alternative Uses for Cameron Run Regional Park

cc: Park and Recreation Commission
Historic Alexandria Resources Commission
Emily Baker, Acting Deputy City Manager
Lance Mallamo, Director, Office of Historic Alexandria
James Spengler, Director, Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities



NOVA PARKS

Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority

5400 Ox Road, Fairfax Station, VA 22039 | 703-352-5900 | Fax: 703-273-0905 | www.novaparks.com

DATE: August 10, 2015

TO: Mark Jinks, Alexandria City Manager

FROM: Paul Gilbert, NOVA Parks Executive Director *AG*

RE: Opportunity to preserve Alexandria's History

Mark, thank you for meeting with me and Emily Baker recently to discuss a unique opportunity to preserve the single most original 18th century house in Alexandria. The 18th century history of the City is central to its identity, and central to the tourism that contributes greatly to the City's success. While NOVA Parks (Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority) can fund this preservation, we will need the non-financial support of the City to make it happen.

Enclosed is a flyer about the property we are calling 'Murray's Livery.' Built in 1772 behind the modern Courthouse, this property was in the ownership of one family for 184 years, which explains its remarkably original condition. The house has been known by a number of names connected to its owners over time (Fawcett House, Brown House, etc.).

The story we have recently uncovered is that from 1772 – 1792 the owners Patrick and Margaret Murray both lived in the house and operated a livery stable behind the house. Livery stables were the 18th century equivalent to Enterprise Rental Car (or Bikeshare). They were places where people could rent a horse or carriage for a journey, or have their horse or carriage cared for. Patrick Murray was a blacksmith. The slave quarters upstairs were likely the area where several enslaved people lived who helped the Murrays in the stable operation. At that time, it was common for small business owners to have several slaves who worked with them in the operation of the business. This is a very different story than that of either the house servant or plantation worker that is more commonly told. Many livery stables had boarding houses connected with them to serve the travelers. We do not know the house was used in this way, but an oversized smokehouse built into the house suggests a commercial use. The three chamber, eight hole toilets in the back of the house served both the business and residential use.

If successful, 'Murray's Livery' will join the Carlyle House as historic sites owned and operated by NOVA Parks in the City. While Carlyle House tells the story of one of the City's wealthiest

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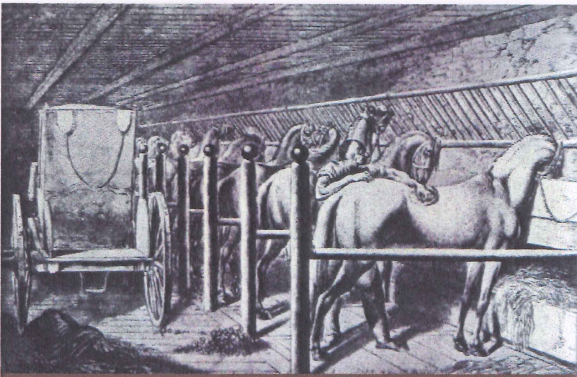
18th century residents, 'Murray's Livery' will tell the story of the working side of early Alexandria.

NOVA Parks has obtained an option to buy 'Murray's Livery.' We can finance this purchase with a 30-year loan, and we can pay for this loan with revenue from our Cameron Run Regional Park Great Waves Water Park. While NOVA Parks built Cameron Run Park and has run it for the last 34 years, the City owns the underlying land. Our ability to purchase 'Murray's Livery' is conditional on an extension of our lease for Cameron Run for another 30 years. This will achieve an important historic preservation victory in Old Town without costing the City anything. Our option gives us until January 2016 to obtain the lease and permits for Cameron Run.

Six months ago, the City's Park and Recreation Commission wanted alternative uses of Cameron Run explored before a new lease was entered into. We heard of this desire and provided you with a memo dated July 30, 2015 that contains cost estimates for all the options that the Commission members discussed. This analysis looks at three redevelopment scenarios ranging from \$7.6 – \$18.6 million.

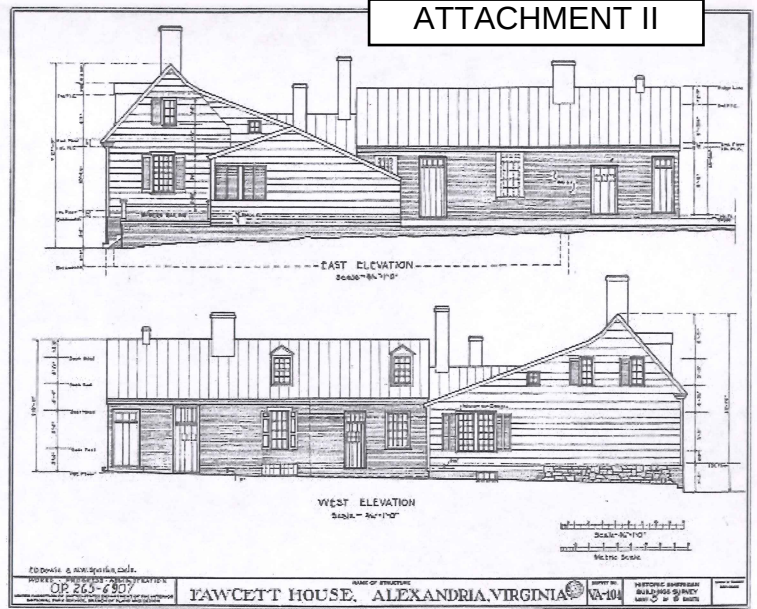
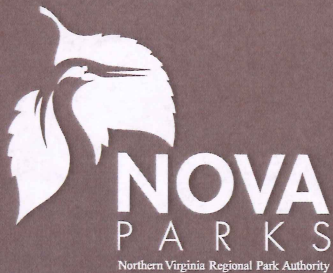
Currently, Cameron Run Regional Park is the most popular recreational facility in the City with over half of City residents reporting to use it on a regular basis. A 30-year extension of our current lease will bring reinvestment in the form of a new and popular water ride. City resident at Great Waves were recently polled and 67% of them were excited about the potential for the water ride called the "Master Blaster" that we would construct with a new lease.

We are excited that the combination of historic preservation and reinvestment into Cameron Run offer the City a wonderful win-win solution to serve a wide variety of needs and desires of your citizens. Senator Patsy Ticer captured what a good deal this would be when she said, "*NOVA Parks is offering the City a remarkable opportunity to preserve 'Murray's Livery' without impacting the City Budget. I am excited about this deal because it will preserve our history.*"



517 Prince Street "Murray's Livery"

A chance to save the
most authentic and
unaltered 18th century house in
Alexandria





The story of this unique property

Lance Mallamo, Director of Historic Alexandria recently wrote about this property that it was “one of the earliest homes in the City, and possibly the least altered 18th Century home in Northern Virginia.” But unlike the grand homes of our founders, this one tells the story of a more humble home and business that was typical in the 18th century.

This house was built in 1772 by Patrick Murray, a blacksmith. Murray also operated a livery stable just behind the house, where the Courthouse currently stands. From 1772 to 1794, Murray’s house and business were seamlessly interconnected. It is likely Murray owned several slaves who lived upstairs in his house and worked with him on running the livery stable business. The back of the house still has the three chamber, eight hole toilets that served the stable customers as well as the household.

Livery stables in the 18th and 19th centuries were places where customers could rent horses and carriages for

travel, or have their own horses boarded and shod, and carriages repaired. Such operations were often located on the edge of town. Until Alexandria expanded in the 1790’s, Murray’s Livery was just outside of the town line. Often, livery stable operations were connected to boarding houses to accommodate the travelers. While we have not yet established that Murray’s house was used for accommodations, the large scale toilets, oversized smokehouse and laundry areas could have supported such a commercial use.

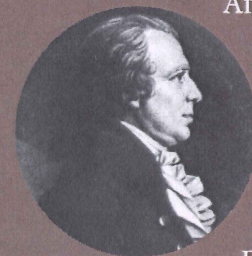
After 20 years of operations, Murray became financially over-extended and lost the property through foreclosure in 1792. This speaks to the “boom and bust” nature of many 18th century business enterprises. As this property is interpreted in the years to come, some of the themes will be:

- How small businesses in the 18th century often blurred the lines between home and business
- The relationship between slaves and owners in enterprises like Murray’s Livery where they lived and worked together
- The role of livery stables in the 18th

century

- The design and construction of 18th century buildings

C. Richard Bierce, renowned historical architect, described this property as “The singular most authentic document of 18th and 19th c. architecture and construction that has survived to the present in Alexandria. It has evolved over its 243 year history yet it retains an extraordinary degree of integrity in that the complete record of original form, materials and techniques is preserved. Students of American architectural and cultural history will benefit enormously from the riches and mysteries of this unique resource that will be available for study.”



After the Patrick and Margaret Murray period, the property was owned by Dr. Elisha Cullen Dick for several years. Dr.

Dick was a friend of George Washington, and later served as mayor of Alexandria. During the time he owned 517 Prince

Street, he commanded a cavalry unit under General Light Horse Harry Lee to quell the Whiskey Rebellion. Back in Alexandria, Dr. Dick was Superintendent of Quarantine during the 1795-1796 Yellow Fever outbreak.

The house had several owners, and usually rented until 1816 when John Douglas Brown purchased it. It stayed in the same family ownership until the year 2000. During this long family ownership the surnames included: Brown, Hooff, Fawcett and Cheeseman. In 2001, Joseph Reeder purchased the property and had wood borings and paint samples tested with the latest technology, as well as other research on the background of this unique historic gem.

A chance to save history:

The 'least altered 18th century house in Alexandria' is not currently under a historic easement or public ownership that would protect it from being leveled or significantly altered. But the current owner would like to see it protected and has entered into an option agreement with NOVA Parks to acquire the property. NOVA Parks owns and operates the 1752 Carlyle House in Alexandria and numerous other historic sites around the region, including a grist mill, church, farm, sections of Washington's Patowmack Canal, and several battlefields. Preserving the significant historic sites of Northern Virginia is an important part of the regional park system.

NOVA Parks can fund the acquisition of 517 Prince Street through a 30-year loan. This same loan will also include a number of improvements and upgrades to the Great Waves Waterpark at Cameron Run Regional Park on Eisenhower Avenue, also operated by NOVA Parks. The revenues from



the waterpark can fund both the improvements at Cameron Run and the acquisition and protection of this historic 'Murray's Livery.'

Because of this creative financing of historic preservation, the acquisition and preservation of 517 Prince Street is conditional on the Alexandria City Council granting NOVA Parks a new or extended lease on the Cameron Run Regional Parkland for 30 years.

For the last 34 years, the City has leased the Cameron Run property to NOVA Parks who built and operates the current Cameron Run Regional Park. The additional 30-year lease will allow NOVA Parks the ability to pay off the loan for 'Murray's Livery' with the funds generated from the waterpark operations.

Former Senator Patsy Ticer said, "NOVA Parks is offering the City a remarkable opportunity to preserve 'Murray's Livery' without impacting the City budget. I am excited about this deal because it will preserve our history."



If you would like to help preserve 'Murray's Livery' and the story of 18th century Alexandria that it tells, please encourage Alexandria City Council to extend the lease on Cameron Run to support the financing of this historic jewel.

"NOVA Parks is offering the City a remarkable opportunity to preserve 'Murray's Livery' without impacting the City Budget. I am excited about this deal because it will preserve our history."

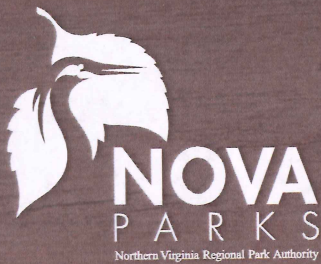
Senator Patsy Ticer

"The house at 517 Prince is the singular most authentic document of 18th and 19th c. architecture and construction that has survived to the present in Alexandria."

C. Richard Bierce, AIA
Historical Architect

"One of the most historically significant houses in Alexandria."

Steven J. Shephard, Ph.D., RPA,
Assistant City Archaeologist





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DATE: July 30, 2015
TO: Mark Jinks, Alexandria City Manager
FROM: Paul Gilbert, NOVA Parks Executive Director 
RE: Potential Alternative Uses for Cameron Run Regional Park

Six months ago, the City's Park and Recreation Commission advised City Council to delay making a decision on the Cameron Run Lease until further study of alternative uses for that land could be conducted. We took note of that advice and have prepared this memo to answer the central question of alternative uses that the Commission raised.

The current lease between the City of Alexandria and NOVA Parks for the development and operation of Cameron Run Regional Park expires in 2021. The purpose of this analysis is to study several alternative uses for the 25.8 acre property and the potential development costs associated with each use. These were the uses that Commission members most frequently brought up in their dialog about Cameron Run.

The following three alternative uses are analyzed in this report:

1. Remove all improvements except existing parking area. Construct two lighted artificial turf fields and a park support building to include restrooms and staff office and maintenance space.

Total Estimated Cost: \$7,650,000

2. Remove all improvements except existing parking area. Construct one lighted turf field and one fieldhouse with indoor turf field and support facilities, such as restrooms and staff office and maintenance space.

Total Estimated Cost: \$17,600,000

3. Remove all improvements except existing parking area. Construct one lighted turf field and one indoor 50 meter pool facility with support facilities, such as restrooms and staff office and maintenance space.

Total Estimated Cost: \$18,600,000

All construction costs include estimates for design and engineering, permitting and the construction of storm water management and BMP facilities.

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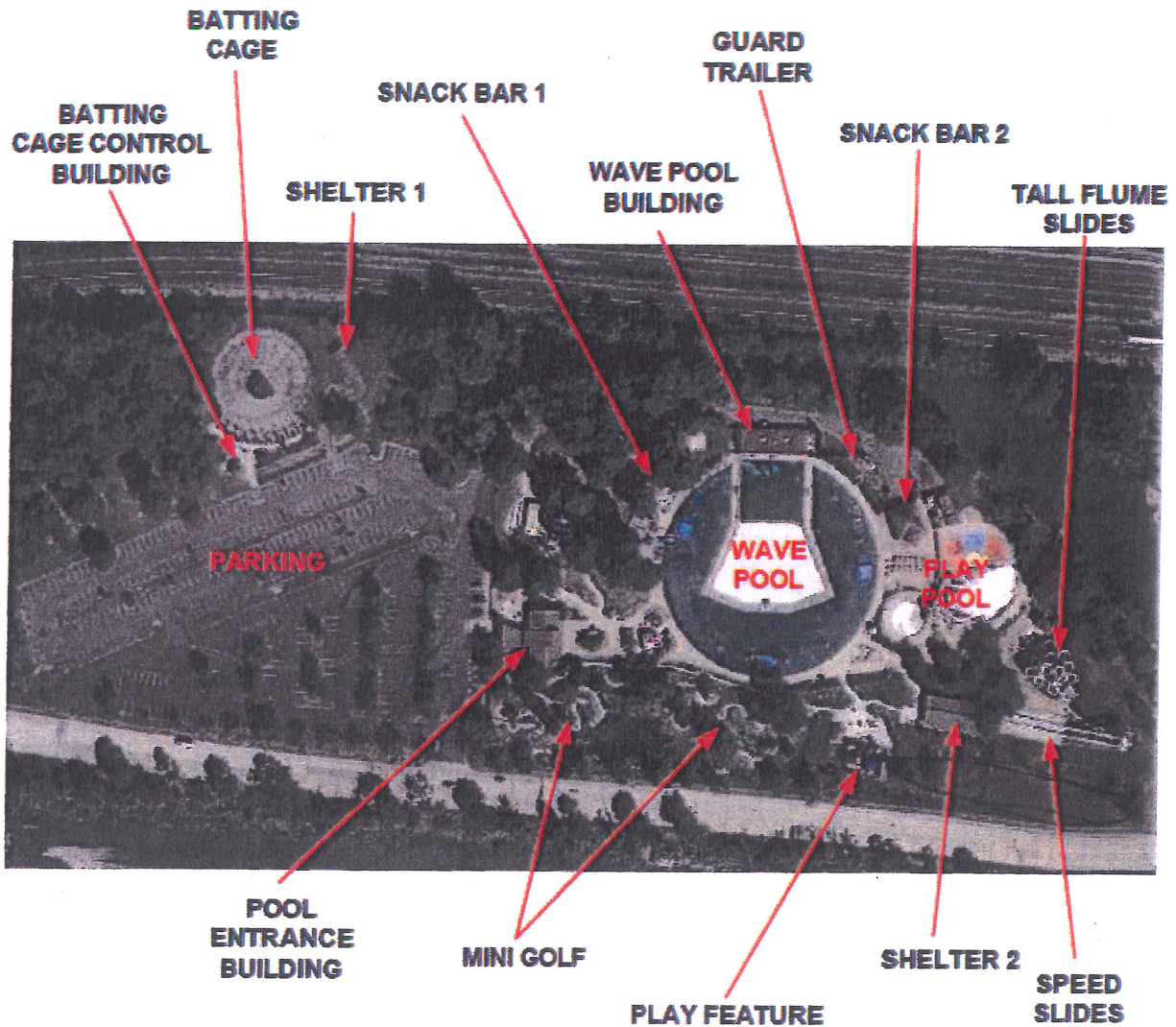
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The following aerial photo notes the existing major buildings and facilities at Cameron Run Regional Park. Cost for removal of these facilities and site restoration was provided by Downey and Scott, LLC – construction cost estimators.



1. Remove all site improvements except existing parking area. Construct two lighted artificial turf fields and a park support building to include restrooms and staff office and maintenance space.

The aerial photo below notes a conceptual layout to add two artificial turf fields to the site. The rectangles note a playing surface area of 190 feet by 370 feet. In order to fit the fields on the site, complete proper grading and install storm water/BMP facilities, it is likely the existing park entrance building will need to be removed. The aging pool entrance building has no insulation or HVAC system, and is not well designed for an alternative use.

Facility Demolition and Site Restoration Cost:	\$4,300,000
(This cost by Downey and Scott)	
Two Turf Fields with Lighting:	\$2,600,000
Park Restrooms and Support Building:	<u>\$750,000</u>
TOTAL:	\$7,650,000



2. Remove all site improvements except existing parking area. Construct one lighted turf field and one fieldhouse with indoor turf field and support facilities, such as restrooms and staff office and maintenance space.

The aerial photo below notes a conceptual layout for this alternative. Restrooms and support facilities are included in the indoor field house.

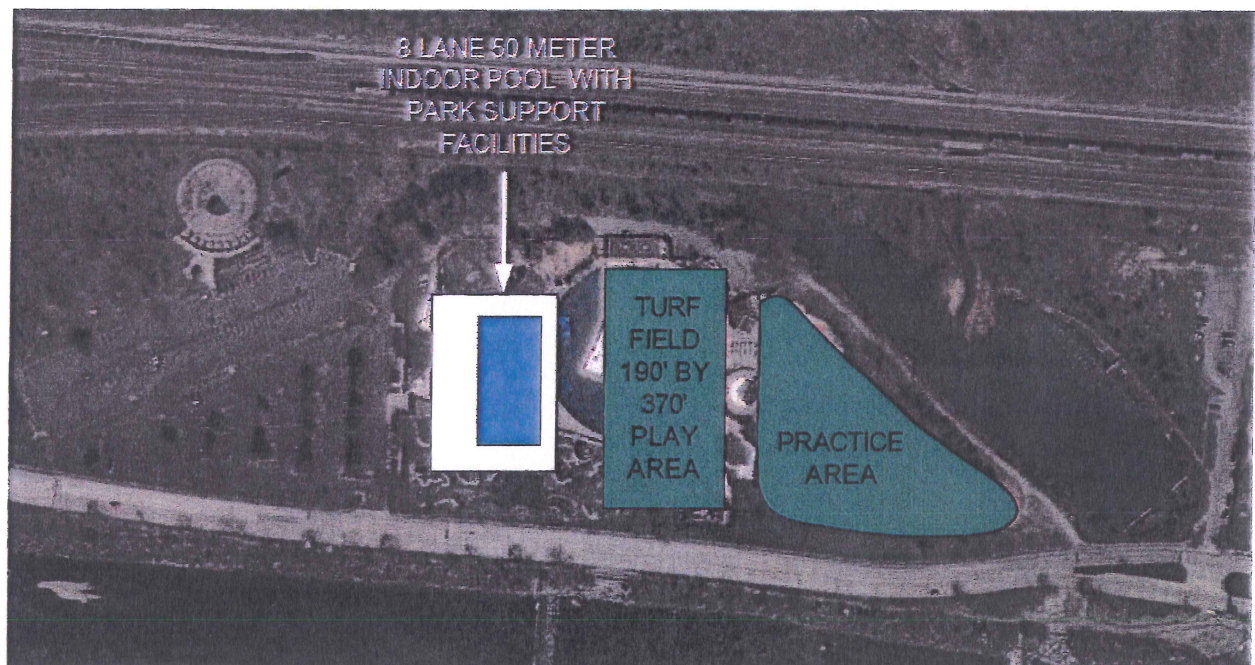
Facility Demolition and Site Restoration Cost:	\$4,300,000
One Turf Field with Lighting:	\$1,300,000
Indoor Field House and Support Facilities (75,000 sf):	<u>\$12,000,000</u>
TOTAL:	\$17,600,000



3. Remove all site improvements except existing parking area. Construct one lighted turf field and one indoor 50 meter pool facility with support facilities, such as restrooms and staff office and maintenance space.

The aerial photo below notes a conceptual layout for this alternative. Restrooms and support facilities are included in the pool building.

Facility Demolition and Site Restoration Cost:	\$4,300,000
One Turf Field with Lighting:	\$1,300,000
Indoor Swim Lanes and Support Facilities (55,000 sf):	<u>\$13,000,000</u>
TOTAL:	\$18,600,000



The cost estimates in this report are very conservative for simple facilities with some reuse of infrastructure. Actual costs would likely be higher. In the last year, Arlington County had to table plans to build an aquatic center at Long Bridge Park because the construction bids came in at around \$82 million for the facility they wished to build.

It is also worth noting that while operating plans have not been developed for these facilities, if they were operated by the City, it is likely they would run an annual operating deficit that the City would need to subsidize.