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Statement to the Alexandria City Council by Gary J. Carr, April 12, 2014

Mr. Mayor and Members of Council, my name is Gary Carr, and I rise to advance the cause for the restoration of the historic running track at George Washington Middle School.

Fifty year ago the Civil Rights Act was enshrined as the law, mandating fairness and equal opportunity for all. Fifty years ago was also a seminal event in Alexandria's history, when Ferdinand Day became the first African American to chairperson the Alexandria City School Board and in the state of Virginia. When I mentioned that at a recent School Board meeting, I also noted that the new superintendent, Alvin Crawley, was the first to occupy his post, and that it went almost unreported. It is all well and good that we have advanced so far, that when another barrier falls, no one takes notice. But the vestiges of past obstructionism is not easily erased. The condition of running track at GW Middle School is a vestige of that past.

George Washington Middle School once had one of the finest high school stadiums in the country. It's splendor was marred by the fact its was for the exclusive use of only part of this community. Literally across the tracks sat the segregated Parker-Gray High School that , separate and unequal, a school attended by Day. *Brown vs the Board of Education* was handed down in 1954, the *Civil Rights Act* in 1964, but Alexandria's schools were not fully integrated until 1971. By that time a generation had graduated, fled to private schools or moved away. And the running track at the premiere high school, turned middle school, was left to slowly decay.

Efforts have been made to make cosmetic improvements to the running track, but they are woefully inadequate, especially for a school of over 1,200 students. The asphalt surface is uneven and pocketed with irregularities. It is too narrow effectively accommodate even a single gym class, and to add insult to injury, the field is closed by the Recreation Department for use by the school. Salting that wound, the City perform maintenance on the fields during school hours, releasing grass and smoke allergens on the very students who aren't able to use the field.

Something is amiss with this scenario. Development is proceeding around the school in every direction. Multi-million dollar park plan fail to address the needs of thousands of children. A road is to be opened on the northern perimeter of the school increasing traffic and pollutants. Yet, this area remains uncharted and neglected. This a problem that deserves a plan.

Fifty years after the Civil Rights Act, and when Fred Day became the first black School Board Chairman, Alexandria still has unfinished business. Incomplete integration is epitomized by a ramshackle oval in plain sight of those who care about and love this community. Every middle school in this city, public and private, has access to a quality running track, excepting one. It is time we remedy a lingering disparity the spirit of the Civil Rights Act sought to abolish.

Long over due is not they same thing as being overdone, and if you build it, they will run.



Statement to the Alexandria City School Board by Gary J. Carr, April 3, 2014

Madame Chair and Members of the School Board, I am Gary Carr. I rise to advocate for the restoration of the historic running track at George Washington Middle School.

I must pause to greet the new Superintendent Alvin Crawley. Dr. Crawley, welcome to Alexandria. I read where there was 56 applicants, including 26 Superintendents, of whom there were 4 finalist. So in a way, you have already won the Final Four. I have spoken before many superintendents in my quest to get this City to do the right thing. I spoke before you as acting Superintendent, I spoke before Dr. Margaret Walsh, Dr. Morton Sherman, Dr. Bill Symons, Dr. Rebecca Perry, and yes, I even spoke to Dr. Herb Berg. This is a span of twenty years. Apparently it has gone unnoticed that you are the first African American Superintendent in the history of this City. That is no minor statement. Brown vs the Board of Education was handed down in 1954, Alexandria schools weren't integrated until 1971. Thomas Chambliss Williams was the Superintendent during many of those years (no I didn't speak to him). I would be kind if I called TC a segregationist. Part of his legacy of separate and unequal policy, is a track that once graced one of the finest high school stadium in the country, to one in utter disrepair. I challenge you to walk around that path at GW Middle School and say that is the best Alexandria can do. It is the last vestige of past that many have, or want, to forget.

Why do I continue to advocate for something that others deem unimportant? Let me express this as succinctly as I can- the condition of the running track at George Washington Middle School is the shame of Alexandria, it is the shame of its elected officials, it is the shame of the teachers, it is the shame of parents, it is the shame of the media, it is my shame, and now its is yours.

But more than that, restoration of the running track represents a commitment. A commitment to the children that is tangible. Rising test scores are for the edification of educators. The kids could care less. What children want to see is something real. Something they can use, not used against them. The running track is not only for the children that have a great organization or strong connections. This ain't even about the track team. It's about the children, all of the children. It is about the weak and the meek, not just those that are strong and belong. Its about those who God dealt a hand of physical or mental challenges. and who rarely have a chance to participate in many physical activities let alone teams. A running track gives them a chance too.

Finally, this about community. I say this without reservation. There is no singular thing you can do that would have a greater impact on the short and long term well being of more children than the restoration of the historic running track at George Washington Middle School. Dr. Crawley, I commend you for you selection, but if I dare say, nothing you do will be longer etched into the memory of the community that if you succeed where other Superintendents did not . Replace a running track where then is none. You will make history when you get this done, because if you build it - they will run.

A statement by Bert Ely on behalf of Friends of the Alexandria Waterfront regarding shortcomings in the Waterfront Plan

April 12, 2014

Mr. Mayor and members of Council, I am Bert Ely and I am here today to speak on behalf of Friends of the Alexandria Waterfront about two shortcomings in the Waterfront Plan – flood mitigation and tour buses – that were quite evident at the work session Council held on Tuesday with the Olin Group.

First, it was quite evident from Tuesday’s discussion about essentially barring all motor vehicles from the unit block of King and Strand that there still is no plan for getting bus passengers to and from the Dandy, Cherry Blossom, and other commercial boats. When I asked one Olin Group official where the bus loading and unloading was supposed to take place, I was told the “the City hasn’t specified that yet.”

As one looks at the proposed street closures and the likely docks for the commercial boats near the Chart House, it is clear that there is just one logical spot where the large, noisy, smelly tour buses will be able to drop and pick-up their passengers – at Cameron and North Union – so those folks can walk to where the boats dock. Of course, big, idling buses will cause traffic congestion on North Union while drowning the residences in Cameron Mews and the Torpedo Factory condominiums with noise and diesel exhaust.

Mr. Mayor and members of Council, at some point in time, and it must be soon, the closely related issues of where the commercial boats will dock and be serviced and where their passengers will disembark from and reboard buses, must be addressed in a manner acceptable to nearby residents.

Second, even at this stage of waterfront planning, attempts to minimize nuisance flooding at the bottom of King and Prince streets by building a multi-million dollar elevated walkway or other flood barriers at public expense, must be reconsidered.

The fairness of using taxpayer dollars to provide nuisance flood protection for a handful of property owners, such as the Mai Thai, is highly questionable given that these property owners can flood-proof their properties to the extent that makes economic sense to them. In addition most, if not all, of the tidal-related backup in the storm sewer lines can be eliminated through the simple use of flow-check valves at the discharge point. This will be a much cheaper solution to the problem than what URS is proposing.

The City seems to be trying to slide past a critical question about its proposal to pump stormwater, and especially storm-surge “overtopping,” into the Potomac – can the City obtain the necessary permits to do so given the contaminants that will be in those flood waters? We think not.

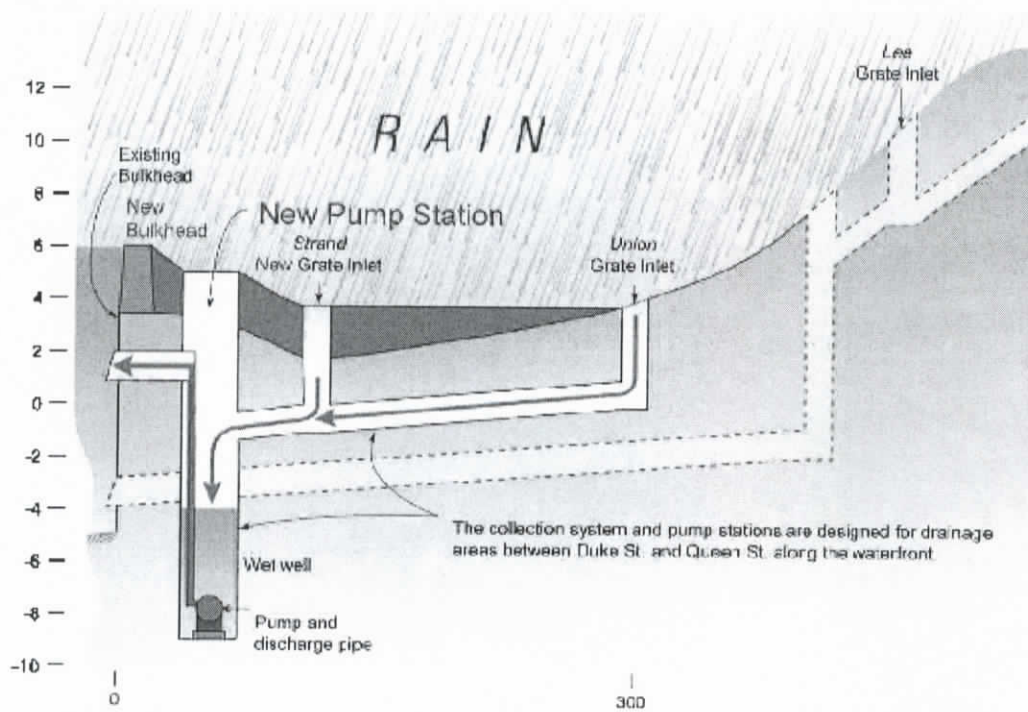
One local expert on this subject has told me that a basic legal premise in dealing with point-source contaminated water is that “if you capture it, you own it.” This means that water captured in a wet-well, as shown in the attached illustration, must be treated before pumping it into a tributary of the Chesapeake Bay.

Water collecting behind whatever barriers are constructed along or near the river’s edge will surely be contaminated. Before the City proceeds further with its flood mitigation design work, it needs to address the legal hurdles to pumping contaminated flood water directly into the Potomac rather than sending it first to a treatment plant.

Finally T&ES must specifically address how it will handle contaminated storm-surge water trapped behind the barrier in an Isabelle or Sandy-like event. The likelihood of overtopping the proposed barrier is at least once every 10 years. Overtopping is a predicable issue that will have a direct impact on the cost-benefit analysis of the proposed project. It needs to be addressed now!

Thank you for your time today. I welcome your questions.

PROPOSED STORM SEWER PROFILE- SHOWING COLLECTION SYSTEM AND PUMP STATION



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4-12-14

STATEMENT BY
RICHARD E. MERRITT, CO-CHAIR
RIPLEY FORBES, CO-CHAIR
ALEXANDRIA COALITION FOR CLEAN AND SMOKE FREE AIR
BEFORE
CITY COUNCIL PUBLIC HEARING
APRIL 12, 2014

On behalf of the Alexandria Coalition for Clean and Smoke Free Air, we urge City Council to provide a second year of financial support for the Smoking Cessation and Secondhand Smoke Reduction Project at the Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority (ARHA).

The Alexandria Coalition for Clean and Smoke Free Air was established more than five years ago; its mission is ***to prevent death and disease within the Alexandria community caused by tobacco use and involuntary exposure to secondhand smoke.*** The Coalition's vision statement is: ***Alexandria will be the most smoke free city of its size in America by the end of 2015.***

We have always felt that our mission and vision are quite consistent with and supportive of Goal #2 in City Council's Strategic Plan: ***Alexandria respects, protects and enhances the health of its citizens and the quality of its natural environment.***

Data (along with anecdotal evidence) presented last year indicated that one of the greatest challenges to the fulfillment of our mission and vision – and to the City's goal of protecting and enhancing the health of its citizens – was the prevalence of tobacco use and the potentially high levels of exposure to secondhand smoke within the affordable housing community.

Council heeded these warnings and authorized a \$35,000 grant to the Coalition to partner with ARHA on an innovative community-based smoking cessation demonstration. The project had two key components:

- (1) work with ARHA Board of Governors to adopt a comprehensive Non-Smoking policy for ARHA residents; and,

- (2) expand access to affordable and comprehensive smoking cessation services to all ARHA residents interested in quitting smoking.

The first goal was fulfilled by a unanimous vote by ARHA's Board of Governors at its February 2014 meeting in support of a Non-Smoking Policy at ARHA. The policy is set to take effect in July 2014 and will be phased in over a twelve-month period. It is only the third housing authority in Virginia to take such action. Once fully implemented, however, ARHA's policy will be the most far reaching in the Commonwealth. It will cover more than three times as many family units and individuals as the housing authorities in Portsmouth and Chesapeake combined.

More notable, however, ARHA has fully embraced the importance of helping their residents to quit smoking. They are actively supporting the provision of evidence-based smoking cessation services for all residents in need. This is quite rare among the 430 plus housing authorities nationwide that have adopted smoke free policies so far.

The second goal was to develop a model smoking cessation system for ARHA residents. The past six months have been devoted to the creation of a unique medical model system for delivering comprehensive cessation services to mostly low-income, uninsured individuals. The system includes access to free group cessation counseling clinics provided by ARHA employees trained by the American Lung Association as Smoking Cessation Facilitators. In addition, the program links each smoker to a primary care provider through the Alexandria Neighborhood Health Services Inc. (ANHSI). ANHSI providers will assess each clinic participant for smoking behavior, prescribe FDA-approved medications and therapies, and refer individuals to behavioral health counselors when appropriate.

The first Smoking Cessation Clinic at ARHA will occur during the third week of April 2014 and will continue for a seven-week period. The first clinic will include up to 12 residents. The clinic will be offered once a week for a full seven-week term; each clinic will last approximately 90 minutes. During the group classes, participants will learn how to overcome their tobacco addiction so they and their families can start enjoying the benefits of better health.

With the No Smoking policy adopted and a system for delivering cessation services to low-income residents in place, we need Council's continued

support to ensure a full-year of implementation of the policy and the cessation program. We are therefore requesting a one-year grant in the amount of \$30,000 to fulfill the following four purposes:

- (1) to ensure a smooth transition and timely implementation of the Non-Smoking policy and the collection of data necessary to measure the impact of the policy on the incidence of smoking and incidence of diseases related to secondhand smoke exposure;
- (2) to provide a full year's experience with the newly created ARHA model cessation system for delivering comprehensive smoking cessation services to an increasing expected level of demand for such services;
- (3) to encourage private owners of apartments/units housing Section 8 residents to adopt and implement a Non-Smoking policy consistent with the one adopted by the ARHA Board; and,
- (4) to determine the feasibility of extending the ARHA cessation model to other disadvantaged populations such as the homeless and those with mental illness.

ARHA's Smoking Cessation Services program is unique and a potential model for other high-risk communities in Alexandria. The cessation services offered are identical to the comprehensive services heretofore available only to middle and upper income individuals and households. Second, the model makes the services easily ACCESSIBLE. Group counseling is provided by ARHA employees trained as Cessation Facilitators right on the ARHA campus; transportation to primary care providers for assessment and medications and/or to behavioral health counselors for individual counseling will be arranged and subsidized by ARHA.

Recent evidence strongly shows that smoking is increasingly a habit of the poor. The adult smoking rate in Alexandria is 9 percent; at ARHA it is estimated to be between 30 and 35 percent. Tobacco-related health disparities are particularly acute in low-income, African American communities and will only grow wider if unattended. The quit rate for smoking in the African American community is significantly lower (35%) compared to that of whites (50%). The good news is that research continues to identify more and more health benefits of quitting; moreover, evidence-based practices also point the way to effective systems for helping motivated individuals to break their addiction to tobacco.

The local excise tax on cigarettes in Alexandria generates more than \$3 million in revenue each year; and the great majority of that tax is borne by many of the most socially and economically disadvantaged members of our community. \$30,000 allocated for smoking cessation among ARHA residents represents less than ONE PERCENT of the \$3 million plus the City currently receives from cigarette sales. It's a small investment but an important one on behalf of health equity. The payoff in reducing health risks to the City's poor and fostering lifelong health for current and former smokers and their family members is a great value to our community.

Thank you very much for your attention to our request.

ORAL STATEMENT
RICHARD MERRITT, CO-CHAIR
ALEXANDRIA COALITION ON CLEAN AND
SMOKE FREE AIR

CITY COUNCIL PUBLIC HEARING
APRIL 12, 2014

MY NAME IS RICHARD MERRITT AND I AM HERE AS THE CO-CHAIR OF THE ALEXANDRIA COALITION ON CLEAN AND SMOKE FREE AIR.

THE COALITION WAS ESTABLISHED MORE THAN FIVE YEARS AGO WITH A MISSION ***TO PREVENT DEATH AND DISEASE WITHIN THE ALEXANDRIA COMMUNITY CAUSED BY TOBACCO USE AND INVOLUNTARY EXPOSURE TO SECONDHAND SMOKE.***

I AM HERE THIS MORNING TO SAY THANK YOU TO CITY COUNCIL FOR THE GRANT YOU AWARDED THE COALITION LAST YEAR TO PARTNER WITH THE ALEXANDRIA REDEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING AUTHORITY (ARHA) ON AN INNOVATIVE COMMUNITY-BASED SMOKING CESSATION DEMONSTRATION, AND

TO ASK YOUR SUPPORT FOR ONE MORE YEAR OF FUNDING TO GAIN A FULL YEAR OF EXPERIENCE WITH THE NON-SMOKING POLICY AND THE MODEL CESSATION PROGRAM WE HAVE ESTABLISHED AT ARHA.

THE TWO KEY GOALS UNDER THE CURRENT GRANT HAVE ESSENTIALLY BEEN FULFILLED:

- Work with ARHA Board of Governors to adopt a comprehensive Non-Smoking policy for ARHA residents; and,
- Expand access to affordable and comprehensive smoking cessation services to all ARHA residents interested in quitting smoking.

The first goal was fulfilled by a unanimous vote by ARHA's Board of Directors at its February 2014 meeting in support of a Non-Smoking Policy at ARHA. The policy is set to take effect in July 2014 and will be phased in over a twelve-month period.

The second goal will soon be achieved as we host on April 17th ARHA's first Smoking Cessation clinic, which is a 7-week course wherein participants learn from trained cessation facilitators and counselors how to overcome their tobacco addiction so they and their families can start enjoying the benefits of better health.

The clinics are just one element of the comprehensive smoking cessation services available to ARHA residents. The system is described in greater detail in my formal statement.

Now with the No Smoking policy adopted and a system for delivering cessation services to low-income residents in place, we are asking Council's support to ensure a full-year of implementation of the Non-Smoking policy and the model smoking cessation program.

We are requesting a one-year grant in the amount of \$30,000 to fulfill the following four purposes:

- (1) to ensure a smooth transition and timely implementation of the Non-Smoking policy and the collection of data necessary to measure the impact of the policy on the incidence of smoking and incidence of diseases related to secondhand smoke exposure;
- (2) to provide a full year's experience with the newly created ARHA model cessation system for delivering comprehensive smoking cessation services to an increasing expected level of demand for such services;
- (3) to encourage private owners of apartments/units housing Section 8 residents to adopt and implement a Non-Smoking policy consistent with the one adopted by the ARHA Board; and,
- (4) to determine the feasibility of extending the ARHA cessation model to other disadvantaged populations such as the homeless and those with mental illness.

WE FULLY UNDERSTAND THAT YOUR DECISION TO FUND OR NOT FUND THIS PROJECT MUST BE WEIGHED IN THE CONTEXT OF SCORES OF OTHER WORTHWHILE REQUESTS FOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT.

BUT IN THINKING ABOUT THIS PROJECT RELATED TO ALL OTHER COMPETING DEMANDS, WE ASK THAT YOU KEEP THESE FEW ESSENTIAL FACTS IN MIND:

- The adult smoking rate in Alexandria is between 9-10%; at ARHA it is estimated to be between 30 to 35%.
- Tobacco use and exposure to secondhand smoke are still the leading causes of PREVENTABLE death and disease in the US and in Alexandria.

- Tobacco-related health disparities, e.g. lung cancer, cardiovascular disease and COPD, are widening among low-income, African American communities, and will only grow wider if unattended.
- Deaths from smoking-related diseases are significantly higher among African Americans despite the fact they typically smoke fewer cigarettes a day and initiate smoking at a later age. This is due in part to the fact that more than 80% of African American smokers smoke menthol cigarettes, compared to only 23% of white smokers.
- It's important to understand the insidious nature of mentholated cigarettes. The cool feeling caused by menthol means that smokers tend to inhale more deeply and hold smoke longer, thus taking in more nicotine, tar and other toxins, than those who smoke regular cigarettes.
- Moreover, tobacco manufacturers have used menthol cigarettes for years to target vulnerable populations, particularly racial and ethnic minorities and teen smokers.
- Quitting smoking is very difficult to achieve and usually requires several attempts. Research indicates that the average person who smokes makes five to seven quit attempts before becoming completely abstinent.
- This is especially true within the African American community. Roughly seventy percent of African Americans who currently smoke say they want to quit. However, the quit rate among African Americans is 35%, compared to 50% for whites.

- The majority of cigarette smokers, however, try to quit without using evidence-based treatments, which is why they are so unsuccessful.
- ARHA's Model Cessation approach is completely evidence-based; it involves group and individual counseling, behavioral therapies and clinical interventions, plus access to all FDA-approved nicotine replacement therapies and prescription medications. **IT IS A SYSTEM THAT HERETOFORE WAS AVAILABLE ONLY TO MIDDLE-AND-UPPER INCOME INDIVIDUALS AND HOUSEHOLDS.**

The local excise tax on cigarettes in Alexandria generates more than \$3 million in revenue each year; and the great majority of that tax is borne by those who are addicted to tobacco and have very little income – truly, many of the most socially and economically vulnerable members of our community.

\$30,000 represents less than ONE PERCENT of the total revenues generated each year by the local cigarette tax. We're asking for a \$30,000 investment in the continuation of an evidence-based Smoking Cessation effort for low-income residents that City funds have helped to create.

It's a low-risk/potentially high reward investment in an evidence-based program that can greatly improve opportunities for many of the most vulnerable among us to overcome their addiction to tobacco and put themselves and their families on a path toward better health and well-being. IT'S AN INVESTMENT WE CAN ILL AFFORD NOT TO MAKE.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION OF OUR REQUEST.