

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: MARCH 24, 2015

TO: MAYOR EUILLE AND MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL

THROUGH: MARK B. JINKS, ACTING CITY MANAGER *m*

FROM: KARL MORITZ, DIRECTOR, PLANNING AND ZONING *KM*

SUBJECT: STAFF RESPONSE TO PROPOSAL TO CONSIDER UPGRADES TO THE PLAYING FIELD NOW UNDER CONSTRUCTION ON THE ALEXRENEW SITE

At "open mike" sessions at the City Council public hearings in January and March 2015, Mr. William Goff proposed, in lieu of adding lights to the TC Williams Parker-Gray Stadium, upgrading the playing field currently under construction on the AlexRenew site in South Carlyle. At the March hearing, the City Council requested that staff review the concept and provide information.

Summary

Staff's assessment is that the AlexRenew field is not a viable location for a stadium for the following reasons:

- **Feasibility:** The AlexRenew site is so constrained that there isn't room to construct the basic elements of a stadium. Moreover, what could be constructed would need to be built on an elevated platform or structure because the elevated field and underlying wastewater treatment tanks cannot support the substantial additional weight.
- **Disparity of existing facilities:** Although it has a playing surface and some lights, the AlexRenew field lacks nearly all of the basic elements of a stadium, while Parker-Gray stadium has all of these elements except for the lights. Moreover, the AlexRenew field has less than 100 parking spaces available in the garage and nearby on street, while Parker-Gray has over 400 spaces on campus plus overflow parking at Chinquapin.
- **Location:** Parker-Gray Stadium is centrally located and on the same campus as the athletic teams that use it. The AlexRenew Field is at the southern edge of the City, more than 2 miles from the high school.
- **Cost:** Because of site constraints and because of the disparity of existing facilities, the cost of constructing a stadium at AlexRenew field that is in any way comparable to

Parker-Gray Stadium at TC Williams would be considerably more expensive (i.e., in many millions of dollars) than adding lights to Parker-Gray Stadium.

- **Ownership:** AlexRenew has the contracted right to reclaim the field area for its own use in as little as 15 years if it is needed for additional sewage treatment facilities. If this occurs, the considerable investment in a stadium at this location would be lost.
- **Safety:** The location where additional bleachers could be added is the south side of the field. A means of emergency evacuation that is ADA accessible would be required and would be both challenging and expensive to add to this site.

Background

City staff met with Mr. Goff on March 2, 2015 to discuss the project and to talk about the criteria by which a proposal could be evaluated. Staff agreed to conduct a review of known facts informing these criteria and provide the results.

Staff conducted a concept-level interdepartmental review of the idea, which is not a detailed analysis, but which draws on staff's technical expertise and detailed knowledge of the site.

City staff also met with AlexRenew staff to better understand the constraints and potential of the field site and met with Alexandria City Public Schools staff to better understand the requirements for any stadium serving high school sporting events and to better understand proposals for Parker-Gray Stadium at TC Williams.

The resulting notes are incorporated into a matrix, which is attached.

The Site

The AlexRenew site is both complicated and very constrained. The field is being constructed over top of a sewage treatment facility. As a result, the field is elevated above ground on three sides (and a portion of the fourth side). In addition, the field and its underlying tanks are unable to support substantial additional weight, so any additional elements would have to be constructed with their own support.

The field is located approximately 35-45 feet from a delineated Resource Protection Area (RPA), which is a stream buffer where new construction is not permitted except under very limited circumstances. Within that 35-45 foot area, a bike/ped path is planned to be constructed, which also limits opportunities for additional structures.

The field is located very close to a gate to the City Jail and, of course, very close to the AlexRenew sewage treatment facility, requiring enhanced security.

The northwest corner of the site has a terraced grass area that is intended to serve as informal seating for persons viewing the league play that is currently planned. Seating capacity for this area is quite limited and insufficient for high school athletic events. There are four lights for the field; without additional study, staff was not able to determine if these are sufficient for high

school sporting events. There will be 35 parking spaces available on site and another 38 available on public streets. There are bathrooms in the Environmental Center, but neither the bathrooms nor the parking are sufficient for the crowds that could be expected at a high school night game.

The AlexRenew site lacks nearly all of the usual support facilities needed by a stadium: bleachers, locker rooms, trainer's room, goal posts, press box, scoreboard, concession stand, sound system, and so forth. All of these are available at Parker-Gray Stadium. In addition, because the field is elevated, fencing and netting will be needed around the perimeter. Any events where tickets are used would require a ticket booth and a means of limiting access to the field to ticket holders.

The most likely location for new bleachers would be the south side of the field, which would be in proximity to electrical transmission lines. These bleachers would also need to have an emergency egress route and be ADA accessible, which would need to be provided in a new structure independent of the existing tank structure.

Terms of the approval of the project include a provision that allows AlexRenew to take back the site in 15 years if it is needed for additional sewage treatment facilities.



Summary of Review

Staff believes the AlexRenew site is not suitable for a stadium because it would take a very high level of investment to be comparable to the current Parker-Gray stadium and because that investment would be at risk of being lost in 15 years if the site is needed by AlexRenew.

Accurate cost estimates for the proposal would require significant additional work. However, staff does have sufficient experience with similar facilities to state that it will be far more expensive to build a new stadium on the AlexRenew Field than it would be to add lights and renovate TC Williams, which already has the main components of a stadium (other than lights). In other words, the AlexRenew field has none of the elements of a stadium other than the playing

surface and lights; the TC Williams field has all of the components of a stadium except the lights, which will range in cost from \$1.0 to \$1.5 million.

While ACPS is considering upgrades to existing facilities at TC Williams, staff's understanding is that these would be desired even if lights are not added to the TC Williams stadium. Therefore, staff believes that only the cost of the Parker-Gray field lights (and any other upgrade needed solely to facilitate night games) should be used for cost comparison purposes, if this idea is explored further.

The AlexRenew Field is already planned to be fully programmed for league play, which will relieve over-use of existing natural surface fields citywide. If this field were used for a TC Williams Stadium, another solution for league play would need to be found, adding to the cost of this option.

Finally, Parker-Gray Stadium is located on the campus of TC Williams High School and the AlexRenew Field is about 2.5 miles from the high school.

Attachment 1: Comparison of Stadium Locations

Attachment 2: Photos of Tank/Field Under Construction as of March 24, 2015

Attachment 1: Comparison of Stadium Locations

March 24, 2015

ISSUE	TC WILLIAMS	ALEX RENEW SITE
Site Plan		
Parking	Adequate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Available on the school grounds in parking garage (~400 spaces). Overflow parking available on the ½ mile Chiquapin loop road. 	Inadequate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 35 spaces provided on Hoffman property west of Hooff's Run in the interim and 38 parking spaces to be provided when Carlyle Plaza Two is constructed. Additional parking could be provided on the public streets (currently ~35 spaces, but will increase to ~90 spaces once all phases of Carlyle Plaza Two area constructed) (also used by existing and future residents) Potentially available: PTO garage three blocks north of field.
Bus parking/unloading	Adequate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 36 bus spaces currently provided on school grounds 	Inadequate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No designated bus parking or unloading zones. Would need to review turning movements to determine whether buses could navigate streets.
Staging areas for teams, cheerleaders, band, etc.	Adequate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Available on site (in the track area, band room, and gymnasium) 	Potentially adequate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No dedicated areas for staging; could potentially use driveway areas with permission
Surrounding neighborhood	Impacts on neighbors would need to be addressed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Single family houses and townhouses Chiquapin Rec Center Church 	Impacts on neighbors would need to be addressed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multifamily residences (existing and proposed) Warehouses Sherriff's office/jail Wastewater treatment facility (AlexRenew)
Environmental Impacts		
RPA	Environmental issues do not constrain site <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No environmentally sensitive stream that limits construction 	Environmental issues are a major constraint <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The addition of bleachers south of the tank could encroach into stream buffer ("Resource Protection Area") which is approximately 35-45 feet from the edge of the tank.

ISSUE	TC WILLIAMS	ALEX RENEW SITE
Stadium amenities		
Lights	Inadequate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No lights currently provided. 	May be adequate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 lights provided with original field approval. May need to be upgraded to meet high school sports requirements.
Bleachers	Adequate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity for ~3,500 currently provided in bleachers on both sides of field (separate bleachers for home and away team fans). Evening games could result in higher attendance. Current dimensions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Home side – 50' by 180' Visitor side – 35' by 100' 	Inadequate; adding seating is very challenging <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited seating area on the NE corner of the field – would need to add bleachers to supplement seating. Only area would be south of the tank, where home and away team fans would share bleachers. Need to determine any impacts to the tank from adding bleachers. Area south of tank currently reserved for a bike trail. Bleachers would be behind the 15 foot fence/netting around the field.
Bathrooms	Adequate; additional facilities proposed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bathroom facilities provided on site in school and portable restrooms. New facilities may be added with upgrade to stadium. 	Very inadequate for high school athletic events <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 bathrooms provided in the admin building – 3 toilets and 3 sinks in each bathroom. Will need additional facilities for increased number of users.
Locker Rooms	Adequate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lockers rooms for both teams provided in the school. Muster area for pre, during, and post game activities accommodated in this space 	Inadequate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No locker rooms provided on site.
Trainer's Room	Adequate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provided on site 	Inadequate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not provided.
Goal Post	Adequate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provided on site 	Inadequate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field design cannot support goal posts in the proper location, which is over the sewage treatment tank

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Scoreboard, pressbox, concession stand, sound system	Adequate, upgrades proposed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Currently provided, but upgrades planned with a new stadium. 	Inadequate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Would need to construct – not included with original field approval
Track	Available <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provided on site 	Not available, not possible to add <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No room for a track to be added.
Equipment storage	Adequate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accommodated on site in the school 	Inadequate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equipment storage would need to be added.
Fence/Netting	Adequate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The limited fencing that is needed is provided 	Inadequate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The field is designed to have a 15 foot fence around most of the perimeter of the field/tank. Additional fencing would need to be provided around new bleachers, additional netting would need to be added for ball control for football games, particularly at each end zone.
Accessibility		
Walking	Adequate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Within a neighborhood – fairly accessible for families to walk to the stadium. 	Inadequate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very few families could walk to the stadium.
Driving	Adequate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Central to the city; fairly accessible to residents. Fairly accessible from 395. 	Somewhat adequate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not centrally located within the city. Fairly accessible from 495 for visiting teams.
Public Transit	Somewhat adequate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Served by 3 Dash bus lines. ~1.75 miles from the King Street Metro 	Adequate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Within a ½ mile of King Street Metro and Eisenhower Avenue Metro stations.
Proximity to school	Adequate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> On-site 	Inadequate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~2.5 miles from the school
Regulatory Process		
DSUP impact	Amendment required <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amendment to the DSUP for the school to add lights and stadium upgrades 	Amendment required <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amendment to the DSUP for the tank/field site plan to add new structures, create a new entrance to additional viewing area, and amend landscaping plans.

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Applicant	Public <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACPS 	Public/Private <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AlexRenew, although City and ACPS would need to be involved. • Carlyle Plaza Two owners would need to agree to changes to AlexRenew field since they are contractual partners with AlexRenew for the overall project.
Plans and Studies	Straightforward <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typical site plan requirements showing new facilities. 	Complicated <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typical site plan requirements showing new facilities. • An updated traffic study showing traffic can be accommodated and managed for these events. • A structural assessment of the tank for any connections or additional weight, such as bleachers or goal posts.
Ownership & Maintenance		
Land Owner	Straightforward <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Owned by ACPS 	Complicated <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site owned by AlexRenew, but City has approval to use the field for minimum of 15 years. After that point, AlexRenew may need the top of the tank to accommodate additional facilities to address new regulations. If AlexRenew doesn't require top of tank, then City field use would likely continue. • Public access easement currently only covers the field, ramp to the field to the north, NE seating area, and a 10 foot wide bike trail dedication south of the tank. To install bleachers south of the tank and provide access to them, this easement would need to be renegotiated.

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Maintenance Responsibilities	Straightforward <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ACPS 	Somewhat complicated <ul style="list-style-type: none"> RP&CA is responsible for maintenance of the field and bathroom. Would need to coordinate maintenance requirements with ACPS. Somewhat specialized maintenance since the field is above a wastewater tank.
Usage	Single User <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Available to ACPS to schedule as needed without impact to RP&CA activities 	Joint Users <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Would require coordination between ACPS and RP&CA for scheduling school events and recreation programs.
Coordination with wastewater tank	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not applicable 	Complicated <ul style="list-style-type: none"> AlexRenew notes that anything attached to the top or sides of the tank could be problematic. The wastewater tank is a specially engineered precast concrete system. It was not contemplated during its design or the design of the supporting piles that anything other than the deck connector and path would be attached to the tank. A detailed structural analysis and cost estimate would need to take place and recommendations be endorsed by AlexRenew. AlexRenew is a 24/7 operation; depending on the location of facilities and proposed staging and parking, there could be impacts to the truck traffic needed to keep operations stable.
Security/Safety		
Site	Straightforward <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Normal security issues associated with the school. 	Complicated <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sherriff's office has concerns about additional people near the jail, in particular in the area south of the tank. AlexRenew notes security issues of current design have been addressed; if the design/use is change, there may be security concerns depending on the configuration of additional facilities.

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Entrance to field	Adequate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ticket booths and controlled access points currently provided. 	Inadequate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would need to add a controlled entrance point north and south of the tank. • May create conflicts with Sherriff's Office entrance on Truesdale.
Shelter (in case of emergencies)	Adequate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequate space inside the school to accommodate crowds in the event of an emergency (such as storms). 	Inadequate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No indoor location that is open to the public to accommodate crowds.

Attachment 2: Photos of Tank/Field Under Construction as of March 24, 2015



Above: view of edge of tank cover/field looking southeast toward AlexRenew and Beltway. This view highlights the grade disparity between the field and the surrounding area.

Below: view looking south toward Beltway. The tank cover shown provides space for the field only. Bleachers and any other new stadium facilities would need to be constructed as separate structures.





Above: view of tank cover/field looking southeast toward AlexRenew and Beltway
Below: view looking southwest toward Detention Center, upper right (gates in center of photo)

