

ALEXANDRIA PARK & RECREATION COMMISSION

MEMORANDUM

TO: City Manager Mark Jinks

FROM: Alexandria Park and Recreation Commission

DATE: December 1, 2017

RE: Cameron Run Regional Park

At their November 14, 2017 legislative meeting, City Council requested that the Park and Recreation Commission provide suggestions to you for adding to your recommendation “a more definitive statement about the future” of Cameron Run Regional Park, based on our prior findings and recommendations. The request came after some Council members expressed concern that the recommended ten-year lease would essentially pause the transformation of the park from its current seasonal use.

As you are aware, the Commission found the current lease not in the best interests of the City of Alexandria because the limited seasonal use leaves the park unavailable for the majority of the year and neither the lease nor the seasonal use provides revenue to the city. The Commission further found that the highest and best use of Cameron Run Regional Park would be a recreational facility or complex providing year-round active and passive uses where needs are currently unmet. This could include, but is not limited to, natural areas, walking trails, aquatics, indoor or outdoor fields, multi-use courts, and community gathering spaces.

The Commission recommended that Council and city staff make a plan for the future of this park, including planning for year-round uses in the short-, medium-, and long- term. We emphasized that **any** lease of this property must generate revenue for the city and must be limited in duration to allow maximum flexibility for changing uses over time. We likewise emphasized that the city should engage in short-term off-season uses that would generate revenue to be reinvested in the park and seek partnerships and contributions for the transformation of the park.

The Commission made seven specific recommendations to Council:

1. City Council should take **affirmative legislative action immediately to recognize the current Cameron Run site as the future location of a Citywide (as opposed to neighborhood) recreational facility or complex**, regardless of any action as to the NOVA Parks lease.
2. City Council should not entertain the proposed 40-year lease extension.

3. City Council and staff should **consider and plan for an interim condition in the next ten years**. In doing so, the City Council should provide for **dedicated revenue and funding streams** to fund the transformation of the park.
4. **The interim condition should include temporary uses that can activate the space and provide revenue that can be invested in the park**. All revenue to the city generated by any use of the park should be reinvested into the transformation of the park.
5. City staff should continue to **seek public/private partnerships and developer contributions to support the transformation of the park**.
6. If the interim condition includes any lease extension, lease renewal, or new lease with NOVA Parks or any other park operator, **the agreement should contain express provisions to facilitate the transition to a citywide recreational facility, and to ensure that this transition occurs within the next ten years**.
7. Any lease extension, lease renewal, or new lease with NOVA Parks or any other park operator should be subject to rigorous public review at an early stage to ensure it is in the public interest of the citizens of Alexandria, in particular with respect to financial provisions, enforcement, length of lease term, and off-season uses.

The bolded portions of our recommendations above address the concerns expressed by City Council at the legislative meeting. To address Council's concerns, the Commission suggests revising your proposed recommendations as follows:

- **Change point 1(d) to further define desired off-season uses.**
"Establish within the lease with NOVA Parks the permission for the City to use designated areas of the NOVA Park leased area (such as the parking lot) in the off-season **for temporary uses that can activate the space and generate revenue for reinvestment in the future of the park, such as festivals, markets, concerts, ice skating, concerts, outdoor movies, basketball, tennis, futsal, and running events or other similar uses.**"
- **Change point 2 to reflect the more detailed recommendation.**
"Declare that it is the City's intent that as of January 1, 2028, Cameron Run Park **will become a recreational complex providing year-round active and passive uses including but not limited to natural areas, walking trails, aquatics, indoor or outdoor fields, multi-use courts, and community gathering spaces.**"
- **Change point 3 to reflect that the detailed recommendation and planning process remains in force even if NOVA Parks does not accept the 10-year lease.** "Declare that if lease negotiations based

upon the above proposed terms are unsuccessful, then the existing lease would expire on July 1, 2021 and the Cameron Run parkland would revert to City control and custody for public park and recreation purposes **with the goal that it become a recreational complex providing year-round active and passive uses including but not limited to natural areas, walking trails, aquatics, indoor or outdoor fields, multi-use courts, and community gathering spaces by January 1, 2028.**"

- **Add a point 4 to make clear that planning and action can start now regardless of the fact of a lease.** "Declare that during the ten year period the City will engage in planning for the transformation of the park, including engaging with potential partners, and will begin the transformation of the park to the extent feasible."

We understand, as you do, that any lease would not pause the transformation process but instead would both start it and provide some funding for it. Planning – including seeking partnerships (with any number of entities, including NOVA Parks) for funding and operation of a transformed park – can and should occur during the next ten years. Short-term temporary uses can begin immediately and transformation of at least some of the space can begin well before a ten-year lease ends.