



Legislation Text

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City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: JUNE 6, 2023

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

THROUGH: JAMES F. PARAJON, CITY MANAGER /s/

FROM: TARRENCE MOORER, INTERIM DIRECTOR, TRANSPORTATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

DOCKET TITLE:

Consideration of Taylor Run and Strawberry Run Stream Projects Stakeholder Collaboration Recommendations.

ISSUE: Consideration of recommendations from the community Consensus Building Groups to stabilize portions of Taylor Run and Strawberry Run and incorporate the alternatives to the original natural channel design approach where feasible.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council support the community ‘consensus alternative’ design approaches developed through collaboration with the Taylor Run stakeholder group and the Strawberry Run stakeholder group as an alternative to the original natural channel design approach, and direct staff to pursue these alternative designs as discussed below.

BACKGROUND: At the April 27, 2021, Legislative meeting, the City Council directed staff to pause the Taylor Run and Strawberry Run stream restoration projects, to do more measurements for these two projects, to conduct further community engagement including with the Environmental Policy Commission, and to collaborate on alternatives to natural channel design. (See Attachment 1). To help facilitate a consensus on an alternative approach to the original stream restoration designs for Taylor Run and Strawberry Run, the City contracted with the University of Virginia’s Institute for Engagement & Negotiation (IEN) as a neutral third party to assist with community engagement and develop the collaboration process. The Council also directed staff to move forward with construction for the Lucky Run Stream Restoration project, which began May 15, 2023.

DISCUSSION: During the first phase of collaboration, IEN formed a Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG) comprised of the Alexandria Environmental Policy Commission (EPC), civic associations, and community members. IEN also conducted interviews with the SAG and select City staff. Findings were presented to EPC in March 2022 and were captured in the *Stakeholder Assessment Report for Two Stream Health Improvement Projects in the City of Alexandria* <<https://www.alexandriava.gov/sites/default/files/2022-08/COAFINALInterviewReportMay2022.pdf>> (May 2022, Attachment 2). The second phase of the collaborative process facilitated by IEN focused on consensus building for an alternative approach that the City Manager kicked off at a public meeting in September 10, 2022, which included speaking slots from the EPC chair and representatives from the community, along with presentations by the City’s consultant, City staff, invited outside technical experts, and Dr. Field (as requested by the community) on potential alternative approaches. At the end of the meeting, stakeholders self-selected to join either a Taylor Run or Strawberry Run Consensus Building

Group (CBG) to focus on alternatives for each stream.

Additional separate meetings were held through March 2023 by the Taylor Run CBG and the Strawberry Run CBG to further discuss four different alternative concepts including bioengineering, hard armoring, a minimal approach, and Dr. Field presenting his large wood approach. The discussions included rough order of magnitude cost estimates and potential tree impacts for each alternative. The goal of the meetings was to reach consensus on the preferred alternative design approach for each stream to be captured in a final report by IEN.

The City of Alexandria Stream Improvement Project Process and Outcomes: Taylor Run and Strawberry Run (April 2023, Attachment 3) IEN report captured the second phase of collaboration, describing the consensus building process and developing recommendations for the consensus approach of each CBG. The process included formation of statements that were discussed, tested for consensus, and further revised as needed and retested for consensus to reach a “consensus alternative” approach for each stream. The two groups generally formed consensus around a “minimal approach” that included the incorporation of the “large wood” concept presented by Dr. Field, as applicable. Some overarching recommendations from IEN’s report include continuing engagement with the CBGs and the community through the design and construction phases of the projects, including Dr. Field if available, and that a minimal approach be used to minimize impacts.

The “consensus alternative” for Taylor Run focuses on a “minimal approach” to protect the critical sanitary infrastructure that includes stabilizing the two sanitary sewer crossings and the exposed manhole. For Strawberry Run, the design of the “minimal approach” will include an evaluation of locations where improvement can be made to benefit the stream. This work is contingent on access being granted from private property owners to perform portions of the work to benefit the stream.

If the Council supports staff’s recommendation to pursue the “consensus alternative” for each stream, City staff will develop a process for the community to remain engaged in the design and construction. Since only very basic concepts of the alternatives were discussed, full design and feasibility analysis is required, and access easements on private property, if applicable, will be needed. As discussed with each CBG, this process would include the procurement of engineering design services taking roughly six to nine months and extend through winter 2023/2024. The design consultant will need about 10 to 12 months to allow for 30%, 60%, 90%, and 100% design stages that would be completed winter 2024/2025. Staff will seek input from project stakeholders during this phase. After that time, construction procurement would take roughly four to six months and completion of the construction work would take roughly seven to ten months and be completed around the end of winter 2026.

FISCAL IMPACT: The alternatives discussion with the stakeholder groups included rough order of magnitude cost estimates for the consensus approach, which focused on a mix of the “minimal intervention” and “large wood” approaches that includes protecting the critical sanitary infrastructure for Taylor Run. Based on those rough construction cost estimates, and assuming 15% for design costs, the consensus approach is estimated to cost ~\$2 million for Taylor Run with ~\$1.5 million currently budgeted and \$1.2 million for Strawberry Run with ~\$500,000 currently budgeted. Staff will proceed with the design of the projects and depending upon the extent of the work, staff may need to request the use of reprogrammed stormwater utility fund balance, make a request for additional funding, or shift funding from other projects to complete the work. For Taylor Run, sanitary sewer funding can help offset the cost given the focus on stabilizing the sanitary infrastructure. Cost estimates and work extent will be refined during the design process. Note that the consensus alternatives are focused on spot improvement stabilizations that do not meet the protocols that are eligible for Chesapeake Bay Pollution reduction credits and are not eligible for Stormwater Local Assistance Fund (SLAF) grant funding for water quality.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Materials From April 27, 2021 City Council Docket
2. Stakeholder Assessment Report for Two Stream Health Improvement Projects in the City of Alexandria (May 2022)
3. City of Alexandria Stream Improvement Project Process and Outcomes: Taylor Run and Strawberry Run (April 2023)
4. Presentation

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