



Legislation Text

File #: 16-5931, Version: 1

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: DECEMBER 7, 2016

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: MARK B. JINKS, CITY MANAGER /s/

DOCKET TITLE:

Consideration of a Grant Application to the Virginia Outdoors Foundation For a Grant in the Amount of \$350,000, to Acquire Real Property Known as the Murray-Dick-Fawcett House Located at 517 Prince Street for Historic Preservation and Open Space Purposes.

ISSUE: Council consideration of a grant application to the Virginia Outdoors Foundation (VOF), for a grant of \$350,000 to acquire the real property known as the Murray-Dick-Fawcett House located at 517 Prince Street, for use as a historic house museum, education center and vest pocket park/open space.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council authorize the City Manager to:

- (1) Approve and submit a grant application to the VOF in January, 2017;
- (2) Accept a grant of \$350,000, if awarded from VOF with the understanding that the property be acquired for historic preservation and open space purposes subject to open space, exterior architectural and interior woodwork easements as specified by VOF and the Virginia Department of Historic Resources; and
- (3) Execute all necessary documents that may be required.

BACKGROUND: The Murray-Dick-Fawcett House, located at 517 Prince Street, has long been recognized as one of the oldest, and most authentic pre-Revolutionary homes remaining in the City of Alexandria. The house was built about 1772 and documented by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) in the 1930's, with the architectural drawings prepared at that time now held within the collections of the Library of Congress. In the 1960's the house was included within the Alexandria National Historic Landmark District, receiving the

highest designation for historic recognition and protection afforded by the Federal government. The adjacent land plot, which once held a three-story office building, contains a large garden area and terrace that will provide a beautiful vest-pocket public park one block from both King and South Washington Streets.

DISCUSSION: In September, 2016, the City received an award of \$900,000, the highest amount of 23 grants awarded statewide, from the Virginia Land Conservation Fund towards acquisition of the 517 Prince Street property. An additional \$350,000 in funding is required to complete the \$1,250,000 purchase price for the property to achieve acquisition without cost to the City. Also, the current property owner is donating his equity in the parcel as a “bargain sale” to provide the necessary match required for the grant funding. Once acquired, the Office of Historic Alexandria (OHA) will operate the site as part of the City owned-and-operated “museum system”, now accredited by the American Alliance of Museums (AAM), one of eight municipally owned-and-operated systems in the United States. Initially, due to the granting of a life estate to the current owner, this house will be open to the public initially on a limited basis, and then later will be open to the public more often.

An additional grant to secure the remaining funding necessary to achieve full acquisition cost of this significant historic property from non-City sources, will also support enhancement of heritage tourism opportunities and the preservation of rare open space in the downtown area for residents and visitors alike.

FISCAL IMPACT: The VOF grant program requires a 50% match of the grant award, which is already secured by the property owner’s bargain sale contribution and the VLCF grant award. Additional grants, gifts and donations for maintenance, furnishings and an endowment for the property will continue to be raised by OHA on an on-going basis. Under State law, once the VOF easements are in place in a jurisdiction, a new \$1 recordation fee will be applied to real estate transactions in Alexandria. This is in part how VOF raises money to acquire land and easements.

ATTACHMENTS: None

STAFF:

Emily A. Baker, Deputy City Manager

Lance Mallamo, Director, Office of Historic Alexandria