



Legislation Text

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City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: MARCH 1, 2022

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES F. PARAION, CITY MANAGER /s/

DOCKET TITLE:

Consideration of Grant Application to the 2022 Land & Water Conservation Fund for Funding to Renovate John Ewald Park consistent with the Neighborhood Parks Improvement Plan.

ISSUE: Consideration of grant application to the 2022 Land & Water Conservation Fund for Funding to Renovate John Ewald Park consistent with the Neighborhood Parks Improvement Plan.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council:

1. Approve a grant application, due March 15, 2022, to the 2022 Land & Water Conservation Fund for funding park improvements in the amount of \$1,000,000 at John Ewald Park; and
2. Authorize the City Manager to execute all necessary documents that may be required.

BACKGROUND: The National Parks Service (NPS) administers a grant-in-aid program for the acquisition and/or development of public outdoor recreation areas and facilities. Local jurisdictions may apply for 50% matching fund assistance from the Land & Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). These funds are provided from a federal apportionment from the NPS through the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). Sites that received LWCF funding must be open, operated, and maintained in perpetuity as public outdoor recreation areas and the entire site may not be converted to other uses without prior approval by the NPS. The program is a matching, reimbursement program, meaning that the City must provide a match and be capable of financing the project in its entirety while requesting periodic reimbursement.

Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities staff seek LWCF funding for John Ewald Park, as part of the Neighborhood Parks Improvement Plan implementation.

DISCUSSION: In 2016, the Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities (RPCA) completed a

multi-year process to develop a series of Neighborhood Park Improvement Plans, including John Ewald Park. Six of the recommendations in the John Ewald Park Plan are recommended for the LWCF:

1. Recommendation 3: Install a second basketball court;
2. Recommendation 4: Renovate the natural turf field and add a walking path;
3. Recommendation 5: Replace the old pool site with multi-use courts;
4. Recommendation 6: Restore the existing playground to forest area;
5. Recommendation 8: Relocate the playground; and
6. Recommendation 9: Install shade structure and picnic area.

The plan recommends replacing the former pool with sport courts to meet the increasing demand in the city. One of the courts will be a multi-use court and include a movable net for tennis and pickleball. The other court would be used for futsal.

The current playground is hidden from the street and difficult to access. Moving the playground to the former tennis court area will increase its visibility from Duke Street and encourage greater use. It will also include new and modern equipment, shade structure and picnic facilities, and incorporate a multi-generational Parkour Course.

The existing basketball court is one of the most popular courts in Alexandria. Adding a second court will improve community access and community health.

The plan calls for the well-used turf area to be renovated with improved natural turf conditions, irrigation, and a walking path encircling the field. The plan includes a recommendation that synthetic turf be investigated to expand use of the site with year-round opportunities.

If awarded, the LWCF would require a 50% match towards the project. The approved FY 2022 capital budget already includes \$240,000 for the design for the John Ewald Park Renovation. The proposed FY 2023 to FY 2032 capital budget includes construction funding for the playground renovation within the Playground Renovations CFMP for \$833,000 in FY 2023 which would meet the required match. The City would use the LWCF grant towards the implementation of Recommendations 3, 4, and 5 to add two multi-purpose courts, one basketball court, and improve the natural turf field in the park.

Submission is coordinated through the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). Notification to grant awardees is anticipated in Fall 2022.

Staff recommends submitting the John Ewald Park project for this grant because it is part of the Neighborhood Parks Improvement Plan (Attachment 1), which included extensive public engagement, and a 50% match is already planned in the City's budget. Staff considered other sites but did not find that they were suitably "shovel ready" or budgeted yet. The project is considered a priority project in the plan and addresses community needs in a west end park.

Per the grant requirements, an award to the City would require the 3.88-acre parcel of land to be protected in perpetuity for the purpose of outdoor recreation. Protecting this land is vital to ensuring future recreational opportunities in the West End. Other nearby parkland protected through federal programs include Ben Brenman Park and Armistead L. Boothe Parks, which were transferred to the City in 1997 through the Federal Lands to Parks program. In addition, Chinquapin Park, Angel Park and Forest Park were acquired through LWCF funding in the 1970s.

FISCAL IMPACT: \$1,073,000 City funding. LWCF requires a 50% minimum match. The total estimated construction cost for the John Ewald Park Renovation Project is \$2,000,000, of which \$1,073,000 will be a match from the Playground Renovations CFMP and the Park Renovations CFMP.

ATTACHMENT: Neighborhood Parks Improvement Plan for John Ewald Park (2016)

STAFF:

Debra Collins, Deputy City Manager

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Jack Browand, Deputy Director of Park Services, RPCA

Bethany Znidersic, Acting Division Chief, RPCA

Judy Lo, Acting Principal Planner, RPCA