

Draft Minutes of Ad Hoc Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Stakeholder Advisory Group

January 14, 2010 Meeting

The Stakeholder Advisory Group (“Group”) convened at the Fort Ward Museum at its announced meeting time of 7:00 p.m. Present were:

Members:

Richard Brune  
Ripley Forbes  
Robert Moir  
William Schreiner  
Charles Ziegler  
Ralph Thomas Fulton  
Frances Terrell  
Adrienne Washington  
Linda Ries

Staff:

Laura Durham (Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities)  
Fran Bronberg (Office of Historic Alexandria – Alexandria Archaeology)  
Wally Owen (Office of Historic Alexandria – Fort Ward)  
Jim Spengler (Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities)

As an initial order of business, the group accepted unanimously an agenda for the meeting proposed by City staff. **Member T. Fulton then proposed an organizational motion,** including the following components: 1) Election of a Group Chairperson; 2) Election of a Group Vice-Chairperson; 3) Election of a Secretary; 4) Providing that the Chair is to distribute an agenda and draft minutes to all Members electronically (or otherwise) three days prior to each meeting; and that 5) such information would be posted to the City’s web site by staff as appropriate. **After some discussion, the motion was approved unanimously.**

The Group then considered in turn each component of T. Fulton’s organizational motion. **The following actions were taken unanimously: 1) T. Fulton was elected Chair; 2) Member C. Ziegler was elected Vice-Chair; 3) Member W. Schreiner was elected Secretary.**

The Group then discussed a plan for its work and possible ways and means of conducting its work, including the use of City staff to provide information to the Group and the methods and sequencing for the City staff to provide such information. The use of a document entitled “Fort Ward Park Priorities and Issues Identified by Community,” dated March 18, 2009 and prepared by City staff, as a framework for the Group’s work was discussed, but no particular action was resolved.

Member A. Washington proposed that the Group draft a mission statement to guide its work. General discussion on the proposal ensued, focusing both on the utility of the mission statement as well as possible substance of such a document. Member L. Ries suggested that the Group organize its work geographically by the different areas within the Park site. Chairman Fulton suggested that the Group's final report find ways to end "stovepiping" of authority between different City agencies and include ways to institutionalize the recent improvements in the way the Park is managed by different City agencies. Discussion on both suggestions was held. **Member W. Schreiner moved that members desiring to do so circulate drafts of possible mission statements prior to the Group's next meeting on January 26, 2010, and that such drafts be used as the basis for a statement to be adopted by the Group. The motion was passed unanimously.**

Discussion then ensued regarding the status of the Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities Department's October 2008 action plan for Fort Ward Park. Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities Director J. Spengler explained that the October 2008 plan is a public document that needs to be accessible to the public, and that is why it is available on the City's Web site. Director Spengler further explained that while the October 2008 plan was presented as an action plan, it is essentially a historic one and no action was taken on many items in that plan given the lack of available funds. Some actions in the plan – such as reducing the number of picnic sites in the park – have been taken.

A general discussion ensued on critical issues facing the Fort Ward Park and Museum. Member L. Ries noted that public understanding of the Park is lacking, and proposed better signage. Chairman Fulton commented that the Sesquicentennial of the Civil War will drive better interpretation of the Park, and discussion ensued on possible consequences of the Sesquicentennial, including additional traffic and the need for the Park and Museum to be adequately prepared. General ideas for promoting the park, including updated brochures and films, were discussed as possible final recommendations for the Group, but no particular action was resolved.

Member R. Forbes proposed that the Group begin its work by starting with a speaker from Parks and Recreation at its January 26, 2010 meeting. Chairman Fulton agreed and, with general agreement from the Group, noted that the Group had recently received sufficient information on the history of the Park site and the ongoing work of the Fort Ward History Work Group to be able to begin its work by looking at the operations of the Park itself. Director J. Spengler suggested that his desired outcome of the Group's work would be a set of guiding principles that all City agencies could use when making decisions about Park use, maintenance, or improvements. General discussion followed. **Chairman T. Fulton moved that he: 1) draft a letter to Director J. Spengler and Office of Historic Alexandria Director L. Mallamo outlining areas of inquiry where the Group would like to receive information from each agency; 2) circulate the letter to the Group electronically; and 3) send the letter to the Directors with needed changes from the Group. The motion was approved unanimously.**

The Group's next meeting will be held on January 26, 2010.