

Fort Ward Park & Museum Advisory Group Meeting
DRAFT Meeting Summary
October 12, 2011

Attendees: Tom, Fulton, Janice Magnuson, Jim Walpole, Ellen Stanton, Bob Moir, Lena Rainey, Chuck Ziegler, Ripley Forbes, Frances Terrell, Adrienne Washington, Glenn Eugster, Linda Ries

City Officials: Susan Cumbey, Pam Cressey, Fran Bromberg, Laura Durham, Brian Rahal, Garrett Fesler.

Chairman Tom Fulton opened the meeting and the group approved the September meeting minutes with minor corrections.

Laura Durham, Department of Recreation Liaison to the group spoke briefly on their office's efforts to implement the recommendations from the 2011 Advisory Group Report. She noted that the Department was working on a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between The office of Historic Alexandria, Recreation, Historic Alexandria, General Services and the Department of Transportation & Environmental Services. She is also compiling a list of actions taken by the City. A summary of these actions will be posted on the City's Fort Ward Park web-page. Members are encouraged to send any comments to Ms. Durham.

Tom Fulton indicated that the group had a significant item to move forward. He said that the process to develop the 2013 City of Alexandria Budget begins Saturday. The City Council's delay in re-establishing the Advisory Group has caused a log-jam in moving 2012 funding. He suggested that the Advisory Group send a letter to Council to serve as a placeholder for 2013 funds for Fort Ward Park. The letter would not specify dollar amounts at this time since the Advisory Group hasn't made decisions about the park master/ management plan.

Discussion followed on Tom's proposal. Chuck Ziegler asked if there were specific things we want to ask for. Laura Durham noted that the Recreation Department has designated funds for Fort Ward Park operations. Ellen Stanton noted that Council is looking for community support. Laura Durham added that funds may be needed for the implementation of a master/management plan.

Tom Fulton asked the members for input. Glenn Eugster stressed the need for 2013 funds to complete the master/management plan; historic, archaeological and cultural research; and storm water management.

Tom suggested that as the Chair he will draft an "oar-in-the-water" letter to the Council with general priorities. He indicated that he will send a draft of the letter to Advisory Group members before forwarding it to Council. This action was endorsed by all of the members.

Pam Cressey, Chief Archaeologist, of the Office of Historic Alexandria, made a presentation on the Archaeological Investigations of Fort Ward Park. She indicated that her overview of this work spans the period between 1961 and 2011.

Pam noted that investigations beyond the fortification began in 1991. Her presentation highlighted various work which was performed by the City and it's consultants including oral history interviews by Pat Knox, a consultant. She noted that some of the interviews took a long time to translate. Pam added that some oral history interviews weren't conducted for archaeological research.

Ms. Cressey then told the group about the Inventory of Historic Resources which began in 2009. The Inventory was a graduate student project which cost \$4,000.

Ms. Cressey then described the following goals of the work done in 2010 and 2011: 1) Identify known graves and test research methods; 2) Identify other potential graves; and 3) Complete the Stage 1 archaeological research.

Pam discussed the City's use of Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) in the initial identification of graves and other artifacts. She noted that they selected areas with the highest probability of graves to test this technology. Employees and volunteers ran the GPR over grave stones and other areas locating 38 grave locations. They found graves outside the areas marked on City maps [prepared in 1960-62].

This research examined portions of the Old Grave Yard, Jackson Family Cemetery, and the former Nursery/Maintenance Yard. A total of 22 graves, 19 of which are unmarked, were identified. Pam noted that they calculated the percentage of positive and false GPR findings and determined that the radar used achieved a positive reading 39% of the time. She added that GPR can be used in a known cemetery area to help locate graves. She stressed that despite GPR review the areas noted in two oral history interviews, by Mr. Sargant Young, additional research in those areas is needed. She also stressed, "Not all the areas were investigated. The entire north area of the Nursery/Maintenance Yard was not investigated".

Ms. Cressey then shared recommendations from the work to date. She said that the City will continue to document research as staff and volunteers examine all deeds and other records. They will also continue to interview individuals familiar with Fort Ward [park and community].

Pam highlighted the City's 2011-2012 plans for Stage 2A Historical and Archaeological Research including: 1) Completing research and oral histories; 2) Continued research in the Jackson Family Graveyard and the Old Graveyard; 3) Identifying resource areas including the Clark property; the school and the church; STP's; graves from new oral histories; and the west-side school and church; 4) Preparing a Stage 2 History and Archaeology Report; and 5) Outlining stewardship needs.

Ms. Cressey discussed the results of the research done as part of the City's Interim Storm Water Drainage Project. She noted that archaeological work revealed 1/2 of a coffin which was located under the existing road to the Nursery/ Maintenance Yard. Pam said that "The grave was probably cut by the park road post 1980". She added that with the additional research which was done by the City as part of the drainage project there have been a total of 23 human graves discovered, 20 of which are unmarked.

Pam noted that the draft reports, which are being prepared by Ottery Group consultants, have been submitted. She added that there is \$75,000 available for Stage 2A work and \$41,240 remains for final archaeology work for the drainage project.

Ms. Cressey indicated, "History needs to begin. There needs to be a larger context". She noted that the draft history document is on the web. The revised draft is not complete enough to post on the web. She added that two employees, with experience in cemeteries and the Civil War, have been hired by the City and are working on the review of Ottery Group reports.

Brian Rahal of the Department of Transportation & Environmental Services gave a brief presentation on the status of the Storm Water Drainage Project. He began by saying, "Previously no storm water improvements have been made to the park and this is causing damage to the [Oakland Baptist Church] cemetery".

Brian noted that the french drains have been placed. He noted that some problems with certain areas were encountered that were not expected.

There was a brief discussion about whether the City's work has made a difference. Tom Fulton noted that Thad and Susie Dilley live adjacent to the park and appear to no longer receive water from a seep inside City property. He thinks that the Lynn and Dennis Carroll's property benefited from moving the earth mound [along the park property line].

Lena Rainey indicated, "There is still water going through the cemetery". Brian replied, "We are looking into that". Tom Fulton asked Brian if this was an interim solution. Brian replied that there has been no other guidance beyond this work.

Glenn Eugster noted that the drainage pipe that runs across the O'Leary-Fulton and Eugster-Weatherly properties does not appear to be connected and as a result storm water from the park continues to flow into the cemetery. Brian replied that the inlet connection couldn't be made and they will be redesigning this.

Lena Rainey asked Brian what will be done? Brian replied, "We will look at stopping water that comes south to the cemetery". They may berm-up the boundary or channel additional water to the the french drain. He added that money is still available.

Frances Terrell asked if the City could eliminate the unsightly hay bales. Janice Magnuson asked about how long the hay bales will last.

Glenn Eugster reported briefly on the "What Does Success for the Advisory Group Look Like?" Homework Assignment. He indicated that some of the members had replied and some had not. He suggested that this topic be discussed at the next meeting.

Tom Fulton noted that there was citizen inquiry about the storm water management area, within the park, adjacent to Marlboro Estates and Van Dorn Street. Phil Voorhees, of the Environmental Advisory Commission, was assigned to research the inquiry but couldn't be at this meeting. He suggested that this topic be discussed at the next meeting.

Chuck Ziegler spoke briefly about the Memorandum of Understanding that the City developed for Fort Ward Park. He outlined what is in the Memorandum including sections on park decision-making; meeting minutes; and mowing. He noted that mention of the Arboretum was missing.

Susan Cumbey, Director of the Fort Ward Museum, said that it was a very good framework to monitor. "It's a good starting point". Laura Durham added that signatories to the memo are having monthly meetings with Mark Jinks, Deputy City Manager. Glenn Eugster noted that the agreement would be strengthened if it included provisions on visitor management, planning and communications with the communities near and using the park. Tom Fulton said he would like to see a quarterly report included.

Linda Ries gave a brief report on the use of the park as an arboretum. She said that she talked with the City Arborist John Noelle and he indicated that the whole park isn't an arboretum. The 2002 Tree Inventory was the last one done by the City. At that time there were 661 trees. A gird system was used to inventory the trees--rather than Geographical Positioning System (GPS). Each tree was recorded by location, species and diameter. There was also a section for comments. No recommendations were made for management.

Linda indicated that there appear to be 100 less trees now and not many new ones have been planted. The original idea for the arboretum was to plant trees that were different.

Laura Durham added that there are memorial trees and benches in the park which are the result of the City's Living Landscape Fund.

Glenn Eugster urged Laura Durham to see if the City could provide the Advisory Group with a base map for the park. He noted that the budget that the City Council approved included a small amount of money that was intended to support the group's activities. He stressed that a base map is essential to all of the planning activities being discussed.

No other discussion followed and Chairman Tom Fulton adjourned the meeting.

Meeting Summary Prepared by J. Glenn Eugster, November 30, 2011.