

Proposed resolution to Arlington County Civic Federation for consideration on Tuesday, October 2, 2018

Resolution in Support of the Park Bonds

Whereas, Arlington's parks and recreation facilities add to the quality of life and property values; and

Whereas, a healthy urban forest produces oxygen, sequesters and stores carbon dioxide, removes pollution (ozone, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, carbon monoxide and particulate matter), reduces rainwater runoff, and lowers building energy consumption;¹ and

Whereas, according to Arlington County's Department of Environmental Services, regulated development activity is adding an average of nearly nine acres of impervious surfaces to Arlington per year,² and 45 percent of Arlington is currently paved with impervious surfaces;³ and

Whereas, Arlington County's Open Space Policy⁴ endorses the following principles:

- Open Space – Arlington County shall insure, for this and future generations, the provision of an adequate supply of beneficial open space which is safe, accessible and enjoyable and take the necessary steps to protect, enhance and acquire open space to meet these needs.
- Acquisition – The County shall give high priority to preserving, enhancing and expanding public open space assets, with particular attention to the protection of important, threatened natural and heritage resources and the securing of open space throughout the County.
- Recreational, Natural and Heritage Resources – Arlington County shall insure the best utilization of parks and recreation facilities. The County shall preserve appropriate land areas in a natural state to conserve ecological resources, protect environmentally and historically significant areas and carefully maintain active and passive recreation areas and open space in neighborhoods and metro corridors; and

Whereas, Arlington County's 2016 Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment Survey⁵ showed that:

- Arlington households rate trails and natural areas & wildlife habitats as the types of outdoor parks and recreation facilities most important to them;
- Arlington households rate hiking trails and natural areas & wildlife habitats as the types of outdoor parks and recreation facilities for which there is the most unmet need;

¹ See <https://environment.arlingtonva.us/wp-content/uploads/sites/13/2017/02/iTree-2016-Written-report.pdf>.

² See <https://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/18/2018/07/F3-Stormwater-Impervious-Surface-Statistics.pdf>.

³ See <https://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/18/2018/07/F3-Stormwater-Impervious-Surface-Statistics.pdf>

⁴ See <https://arlisys.arlingtonva.us/index.html#/collection/CBO%20-%20Board%20Minutes%20-%201992>. See September 26, 1992 page 557.

⁵ See <https://arlingtonva.s3.dualstack.us-east-1.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/31/2016/01/Arlington-County-Parks-Rec-Survey-Findings-Report-May-9-2016.pdf>.

- The outdoor facilities that are rated as the highest priorities for investment are:
 1. Hiking Trails
 2. Natural Areas and Wildlife Habitats
 3. Paved, Multi-Use Trails

Whereas, the Arlington County Park and Recreation Commission June 19, 2018 letter to the County Board, “PRC Comments on Proposed FY 2019-2028 CIP” calls for “more of a balance between casual space and programmed space uses” (letter attached);

Whereas, the November 2018 ballot has a question asking if Arlington County shall issue \$30,330,000 in bonds to finance the cost of various capital projects for local parks & recreation,

Therefore,

Be it resolved that the Arlington County Civic Federation

Supports the parks and recreation bond issue and encourages all voters to vote yes; at the same time that it urges the Arlington County Board to:

1. implement a park land acquisition policy and use park bond revenues to achieve park land acquisition of at least three acres per year on average over the next ten years; and
2. use parks and recreation bond financing only for capital improvements with a useful lifetime longer than the bonds’ maturity period; and
3. not use money raised from the sale of parks and recreation bonds to fund the destruction of mature trees or the replacement of natural areas with impervious surfaces.



**ARLINGTON COUNTY
PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION**

**2100 Clarendon Boulevard, Suite 414
Arlington, Virginia 22201**



June 19, 2018

Honorable Katie Cristol
Chair, Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Blvd., Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22201

RE: PRC Comments on Proposed FY 2019-2028 CIP

Dear Chair Cristol:

The Park and Recreation Commission would like to provide some comments on the proposed CIP for FY 2019-2028.

First, we would like to compliment the Board and staff for the many accomplishments that have been achieved over the last couple of years in terms of park and facility improvements. We also understand and generally support the proposed funding for projects, previously approved by the County Board. We support the Manager's commitment to going forward the commission believes that in allocating our resources we need to strike more of a balance between casual space and programmed space uses. The discussion on Park Planning below, alludes to this.

Land Acquisition. The commission is extremely disappointed with the lack of commitment by the county manager's CIP proposal for park land acquisition funds, not only for this year's bond cycle, but for the next ten years. This decision represents a retrenchment on established county policy to provide funds for strategic and opportunistic park land acquisition. As the county grows in population the need for open space opportunities, both for casual use and recreation purposes, and for natural resource preservation, continues to grow.

This move to zero out land acquisition funds is unfortunately in line with an up and down history of the county's commitment to open space, whether by shrinking the park acquisition budget or by applying bond-authorized funds for non-park uses.

We fully understand the resource challenges and funding limits that the County faces over the next few years. We also acknowledge that the Board has been supportive of funding of acquisitions when opportunities arise (e.g. WETA site). But we believe that a proposal in line with what the current POPS process is proposing of acquiring 30 acres of land over the next 10 years must be supported with a realistic funding commitment on the part of the county to reach that goal. In the least, proposing some dollar commitment for park land acquisitions in the CIP out-years would establish a place holder that corresponds with the anticipated growth in population and the needs expressed by resident surveys and organizations.

Synthetic Turf. The Commission makes note of the continuing large expenditures proposed for establishment and replacement of synthetic turf fields. We appreciate the benefits of synthetic turf in effectively expanding the open space available for sports and recreation uses. We also understand the requirements of field replacement for current

synthetic fields, particularly for player safety reasons. But commission members have expressed concerns that development and replacement of fields could take over ever larger levels of county funds dedicated to DPR programs. We propose that the county monitor both CIP and maintenance funding trends to make sure that other park priorities are taken into account. We encourage the county to continue to examine synthetic turf technology, field construction processes and changes in maintenance procedures that could possibly stretch out the useful life of such fields.

Park Planning. In reviewing the 10-year CIP schedule for park planning and development, we generally commend the plans for major redesign and development of a number of parks. We understand that priorities can shift but want to make sure that certain parks and their communities are not continually pushed down the county's list of priorities.

Also, we encourage the county to explore the possibility of doing more interim improvements to some of our parks even while we wait for longer run master park planning processes to commence. As examples, Virginia Highlands, Quincy, and Gateway, three of our larger "urban" parks, are located in areas of significant residential population increases, ongoing and planned. There have been some improvements to these parks in recent years (tennis, basketball, rectangular fields at Virginia Highlands; universal playground and volleyball at Quincy, improved landscaping at Gateway). However, in all of these parks, there is an important need for improving the casual-use experience of park visitors. While it may be a challenge to create Arlington versions of "Central Parks" at these locations, the county should strive for smaller scale improvements that include investments in benches, meeting areas, paths, plantings, or other features that can improve the experience of the urban casual park user. As we understand it, such improvements can be funded through the capital maintenance program. We encourage DPR to consider placing more short-term emphasis on these parks.

Thank you for this opportunity to share our thoughts with you.

Sincerely,



William Ross
Chair, Park and Recreation Commission

cc: Members, Arlington County Board
Mark Schwartz, Arlington County Manager
Jane Rudolph, Director, Department of Parks and Recreation