

MINUTES
City of Alexandria, Virginia
OPEN SPACE STEERING COMMITTEE
Community Meeting – Virtual ¹
October 28, 2020
7:00 p.m.

Open Space Steering Committee Members

Present:

Kaitlyn Blume, Member at-large
David Brown, Planning Commission Member
Tatiana Gutierrez, Member at-large
Martha Harris, Historic Alexandria Resources Commission Member
Brian McPherson - Park and Recreation Commission Member
Kurt Moser, Northern Virginia Conservation Trust (NVCT)
Brandon Pinette, Member at-large
Micheline Smith, One at-large member from the development community (Paradigm)
Denise Tennant, Beautification Commission Member

Vacancy:

One at-large member from the business community
One member from the Environmental Policy Committee (transitioning members)

City Staff

Jack Browand, Division Chief, Park Planning Division, Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities (RPCA)
Ellen Eggerton, City Sustainability Coordinator, Transportation and Environmental Services (T&ES)
Nathan Imm, Principal Planner, Development Division, Planning and Zoning (P&Z)
Ashley Labadie, Urban Planner III, Neighborhood Planning & Community Development Division, P&Z
Judy Lo, Park Planner, Park Planning Division, RPCA
Melanie Mason, Principal Planner, Stormwater Management Division, T&ES
Ana Vicinanza, Urban Planner II, Park Planning Division, RPCA

Guests = None.

Call to Order

¹ **October 28, 2020 Steering Comm. Meeting video is posted at**
https://alexandria.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=53&clip_id=4675

Ana Vicinanza (RPCA) called the virtual meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. She read a prepared statement that cites the City policy and legal authority governing the use of virtual meetings during the COVID-19 Pandemic emergency and provides information on how the public can access and participate in this virtual meeting.

Public comment is received at the end of the meeting with individual comments limited to no more than three (3) minutes per person.

The meeting's focus was open space definition discussion.

Presentation PPTs are posted to:

[https://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/parks/Open%20Space%20Steering%20Committee%20Meeting%20-%2010.28.2020%20\(1\).pdf](https://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/parks/Open%20Space%20Steering%20Committee%20Meeting%20-%2010.28.2020%20(1).pdf)

Presentation details are posted online at the above link. Highlights included:

AGENDA ITEM 1: Project Timeline - Ana (RPCA)

- **Overview of three tasks of timeline** – Each task taking approximately six months to complete. Currently in Task 1 (defining publicly accessible open space). Task 2 is new open space acquisition. Task 3 is open space in new development.

AGENDA ITEM 2: Open Space in Alexandria – Ana (RPCA)

Committee Discussion - Highlights

- **Discussion on which of the example open spaces throughout the City had been visited and any observations.**
- Concerns on noise, activity levels, and messes at Potomac Yard.
- Chinquapin is a favorite spot in the City, however lots of trees down after storms. Fort Williams Park does not have clear access points, on the northern end. A: Some parks, especially the naturalized areas, do have formal entry points.
- Some parks on the list were both privately and publicly owned, but privately owned did not feel inaccessible.
- **Is the Torpedo Factory and grounds around it considered open space?** A: Marina is considered a hardscape park, but Torpedo Factory itself is not open space. Plazas are considered open space.
- **Are there any formal maps like the City bike map that display all the parks?** A: Yes, the map can be found at alexandriava.gov/parklink.

AGENDA ITEM 3: Types of Open Space – Ana (RPCA)

- **Clarification of the definitions of open space** – publicly accessible open space and private open space. Will be focusing on the publicly accessible open space.
- **Clarification of open space definition** – based on section 2-180 of the Zoning Ordinance. Open Space Master Plan (2003, updated 2017) described intent of publicly accessible open space.

AGENDA ITEM 4: Open Space Definition Discussion – Judy (RPCA)

Committee Discussion - Highlights

- **Discussion on how open space should be defined based on what has been read from definitions of open space and own observations.**
Committee was asked a series of questions and had an open discussion of each.
- **Q: What stood out to you from the definitions provided?**
 - A: Noticed throughout definitions, some structures were incorporated (ex. clubhouse, swimming pool). Some of the definitions may have incorporated recreational uses.
 - A: Some of the definitions said “not enclosed in the building”, while some including the building as open space. Similarly, some included parking, while others did not.
 - A: Amazed at the variety of definitions, reflects wide range of focus, but interested in what the goal is.
 - A: Biggest distinction of the word open. Also, key distinction between “usable open space” vs. something that would not be as usable. Another distinction was “former” vs. “informal” use, as in the degree of accessibility or need of formal proceeding (ex. permits). Question on how public conservation easements count as open space.
 - A: Concern on green roof included as open space in development, when not publicly accessible.
 - Discussion of ground level, or that have “at grade” access point. Private open space can be above grade, depending on Zoning requirements. Interest in publicly accessible open space above grade, as open space.
 - Discussion of percentages of open space of certain types

- A: Interested in quality and purpose of open space within the definition.
- **Q: What characteristics do you feel are important when defining publicly accessible open space?**
 - Discussion of diversity of use – as well as quality and value.
 - Discussion of open space that is not accessible, but still very valuable (ex. Conservation easements) from environmental and sensory benefits.
 - Discussion of if water is considered open space. While beneficial, do not believe they can be counted the same way (as acreage, etc).
 - Discussion on educational, historical and cultural significance of open space.
 - Discussion on “publicly accessible” portion of the definition of publicly accessible open space
- **Q: What should not be considered open space?**
 - Discussion of enclosed structures, especially structures like a restroom that provides greater accessibility of the space
 - Discussion of equability of open space
 - Discussion of physical accessibility (i.e. steep slopes)
 - Discussion of water (especially as counting it as acreage)

AGENDA ITEM 5: Next Steps – Judy (RPCA)

- ***Defining Publicly Accessible Open Space*** - Staff will review all the feedback the committee has provided and will develop suggestions for the definition of “publicly accessible open space”.
- Staff will send the draft definitions to the committee approximately two weeks prior to the December meeting. These suggestions will be the focus of the discussion next meeting.

Public Comments

There were none.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for December 9, 2020.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

