

McLean Citizens Association



One Hundred Years and Counting

## **McLean Citizens Association Resolution Fairfax County Park Authority Budget November 6, 2019**

### **Introduction**

**Whereas**, the percentage of Fairfax County residents who rated parks, trails and recreation facilities as very or extremely important to their quality of life increased from 73% in 1997 to 93% in 2015; and

**Whereas**, the Fairfax County Economic Development Authority's web site touts the Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA) parks and other facilities to attract businesses to the County; and

### **Fairfax County Park Authority Budget**

**Whereas**, the number of FCPA employees declined from 620 in FY 2009 to 574 in FY 2018 and the County transfer to FCPA as a percentage of the County's general fund decreased from 0.71% in FY 2010 to 0.62% (\$27.7 million) in FY 2020; and

**Whereas**, the FCPA relies heavily on user fees to fund operations, but user fees decline when there is bad weather and cannot be raised above the level of comparable private facilities; and

**Whereas**, in 2019 Fairfax County spent \$80 per capita on parks and recreation, which was less than Arlington (\$196), Loudoun (\$100), Town of Herndon (\$282), Town of Vienna (\$195), City of Alexandria (\$143), City of Fairfax (\$214), and City of Falls Church (\$203);<sup>1</sup> and

**Whereas**, the FCPA Forestry Operations budget is \$0.58 per resident while the national average is \$7.17, Arlington County spends \$4.25 and City of Alexandria spends \$8.64 per resident; and

**Whereas**, the FCPA Natural Resources budget is \$148 per acre for its 4,720 actively managed acres while the national benchmark range is \$3,000 to \$6,000 per acre; and

**Whereas**, the FCPA's 2016 Needs Assessment concluded that FCPA needed to spend \$155.9 million by 2021 for legally mandated and other critical repairs on property that posed safety risks or was in fair, failing or near failing conditions; and

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/recreational-planning/document/voppd08.pdf>

**Whereas**, as of October 23, 2019, FCPA had completed or funded \$57 million of the critical repairs identified in 2016, but had \$156.5 million of unfunded critical repairs and \$851 million of total unfunded capital needs; and

**Whereas**, on October 9, 2019, the FCPA board voted to request an additional \$7,682,360 from the Board of Supervisors for the FCPA FY 2021 General Fund Budget, to “reverse the impacts of cuts in operational and capital funding, respond to business challenges and provide an adequate level of service to Fairfax County residents and visitors”; and

**Whereas**, average operating profits for the FCPA’s nine RECenters declined from 13% of costs in 2007 to 9% of costs in 2016, and the FCPA’s 2018 Sustainability Plan for RECenters recommended \$196 million in capital improvements to increase their profitability; and

**Whereas**, as of October 23, 2019, the remaining balance of previously approved but unissued County bonds to be used for the parks was \$87 million; and

**Whereas**, FCPA staff currently is developing recommendation for the amount of a Park Authority bond on the 2020 general election ballot, have identified over 87 high-priority projects that will cost \$375 million, and will identify projects for up to \$200 million in 2020 bonds; and

**Whereas**, FCPA staff recommend that the first \$71.3 million of the 2020 bond be used to renovate or improve four RECenters, leaving only \$28.7 million to fund a small portion of other critical repairs if the 2020 bond is for \$100 million; and

### **Environmental/Anthropogenic Impacts and Maintenance**

**Whereas**, locally-monitored streams and rivers have experienced average annual discharge increases between 50 and 80 million gallons of water per year<sup>2</sup>; and

**Whereas**, 2018 was the wettest year on record for the DC area<sup>3</sup> and July 8, 2019 had the second highest hourly rainfall total on record<sup>4</sup>; and

**Whereas**, barren land cover and high intensity developed land increased by 5.22% and 2.18% respectively in Fairfax County from 2001 to 2011, and new development has continued<sup>5</sup>; and

**Whereas**, the Central Potomac River watershed over time has lost forested land, which has been largely replaced with impervious surfaces<sup>6</sup>, which exacerbate damage from severe storms; and

<sup>2</sup> United States Geological Survey, <https://waterdata.usgs.gov/va/nwis/current/?type=flow>

<sup>3</sup> NOAA National Weather Service, [https://w2.weather.gov/climate/local\\_data.php?wfo=lwx](https://w2.weather.gov/climate/local_data.php?wfo=lwx)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/weather/2019/07/09/monday-mornings-flash-flood-dc-contained-billion-gallons-water/>

<sup>5</sup> “An analysis of land cover change in Northern Virginia in the first decade of 21st century”, <https://ieeexplore.ieee.org/document/7577675>

<sup>6</sup> “Development and Land Use Change in the Central Potomac River Watershed”, <http://www.cae.utexas.edu/prof/maidment/giswr2014/ProjectReport/Posa.pdf>

### **Impact of Environmental Changes on FCPA**

**Whereas**, most Fairfax parks are located along or near local creeks, streams, and rivers, and unusually severe weather has increased forestry and other FCPA operating costs; and

**Whereas**, FCPA revenues from user fees declined in 2018 due to bad weather; and

**Whereas**, FCPA shifts resources from maintenance to emergency repairs when it has urgent projects, which reduces FCPA resources available for other deferred maintenance.

### **Conclusion**

**Now, therefore, be it resolved** that the McLean Citizens Association (MCA) urges the Board of Supervisors (BOS) to increase the annual transfer to the FCPA by the \$7.7 million requested by the FCPA Board; and

**Be it further resolved** that the MCA supports the inclusion of a \$200 million County bond for FCPA capital costs on the 2020 general election ballot; and

**Be it further resolved** that the MCA urges the BOS to continue assessing the impact of new development across the county and the effectiveness of best management practices to limit storm water runoff and to adequately maintain storm water infrastructure.

*Approved by the MCA Board of Directors  
November 6, 2019*

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