

Anita Herrera, Chair, FCPF Board of Directors Remarks
Board of Supervisors Budget Hearings Testimony

Tuesday, April 16, 2024

Government Center Board Auditorium

Good afternoon, Chairman McKay, Vice Chair Smith and District Supervisors. I am Anita Herrera and I serve as Chair of the Fairfax County Park Foundation Board. Thank you all for providing this opportunity for me to speak with you today.

The Foundation supports the Park Authority by raising private funds, obtaining grants, and creating partnerships that supplement tax dollars to meet our community's needs for park land, facilities and services. That need continues to grow with greater expectations and desires from the community to bridge the gap so that all residents have access to recreational opportunities with places to play and exercise, along with open space areas and other incredible park amenities.

Your constituents continue to demonstrate their love of the Fairfax County parks that are important to their quality of life!

That being the case, the Park Foundation strongly supports the investments included in the proposed 2025 budget to enhance park and field maintenance, waste reduction efforts, and forest management. All of these will have a distinct and recognizable impact on the user experience in the park system. Making the move towards addressing these perpetual needs with permanent baseline funding, which is more effective than one-time band-aides, will assist in reducing dependency on fees and help make park programming and amenities more accessible to everyone.

Even with this funding, there are still more needs for which the Park Foundation is constantly working with businesses, civic organizations, and individual residents to raise supplemental funds to help address all those needs that we can. Also there are an increasing number of our neighbors in every district who make voluntary contributions to the extent of their ability. The Park Foundation's status as a 501(c)(3) independent nonprofit corporation enables individuals, organizations, businesses, and foundations to contribute monetary donations; grants; Donor Advised Funds; Vehicle Donations; and IRA Qualified Charitable Distribution Gifts. I join 73 others who have included a future Legacy Circle gift to the Park Foundation in their Will.

I am very proud of our contributions over the years, which exceed \$18 million to date! There are many accomplishments worthy of mention, and I will highlight a few. Most recently in this last fiscal year, the Park Foundation secured more than \$2 million dollars from thousands of donors for Park Authority programs, events, and projects.

Also, more than 37,600 residents and friends enjoyed the ever-popular Summer Entertainment Series of 189 concerts, movies, and children's shows held in every Supervisory District!

And finally, I want to acknowledge the generous donors who funded interactive STREAM Features (that is - Science, Technology, Recreation, Engineering, Arts, and Math) for the Woodlands Stewardship Education Center at Ellanor C. Lawrence Park in Chantilly.

Thank you, Supervisors, for providing resources for the Park Authority's Mobile Nature Center staff. This, coupled with the support from Park Authority advocates, and voluntary donations secured by the Park Foundation, resulted in the first Wonder

Wagon. This special vehicle will help activate the One Fairfax Policy by bringing environmental education and outreach programs to our neighbors in opportunity areas, and to popular events including Earth Day Fairfax, which is this Saturday at Sully Historic where the first Wonder Wagon will be unveiled.

The Park Foundation Board was an early adopter of the One Fairfax Racial and Social Equity Policy because it's the right thing to do. Our work helps more Fairfax County residents to access high quality parks and important programs.

We urge the Board of Supervisors to continue its active support and engagement with the Park Authority Board in finding new and creative mechanisms by which we can make the benefits of our award-winning park and recreation system more accessible to all residents of Fairfax County.

Please join us in promoting the good work of the Park Authority to accomplish even more! On behalf of the Park Foundation, thank you.