



City of Richmond

900 East Broad Street
2nd Floor of City Hall
Richmond, VA 23219
www.richmondgov.com

Meeting Minutes Urban Design Committee

Thursday, May 7, 2020

10:00 AM

5th Floor Conference Room (Virtual Meeting)

This meeting will be held through electronic participation means.

City Hall is closed to the public and this meeting will be held through electronic communication means pursuant to and in compliance with Ordinance No. 2020-093, adopted April 9, 2020. This meeting will be open to participation through electronic communication means by the public and closed to in-person participation by the public.

Committee members and other staff will participate by teleconference/videoconference via Microsoft Teams.

Special Guidelines for Public Access and Citizen Participation:

Audio of the meeting will be streamed live online at the following web address:

<https://richmondva.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx>.

To listen to the meeting's live stream at the web address provided, find and click the link that reads, "In Progress" in the farthest right hand column entitled, "Video".

Interested citizens who wish to speak will be given an opportunity to do so by following the instructions below.

[PDRPRES](#) Public Access and Participation - Urban Design Committee
[2020.011](#)

Attachments: [Public Access and Participation Instructions - Urban Design Committee](#)

Mr. Alex Dandridge: This meeting of the Urban Design Committee will be held as an electronic meeting pursuant to and in compliance with Ordinance 2020-093. The public has been notified of this meeting and how to participate by a notice sent out through email, and an instruction sheet posted with the agenda on the Legistar website. The public may participate in the meeting by calling *67-804-316-9457 and entering 937-770-10#. Public comment will be heard for each item on the agenda after the applicant has responded to staff recommendations. Members of the public will be limited to 3 minutes for their comments. Committee members are electronically present, none are physically present in City Hall. We will be conducting a roll call vote with each member stating their name prior to voting. I would like to remind attendees of this meeting to remember to mute their microphones to prevent any potential background noise.

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chairwoman Andrea Almond at 10:04a.m.

Roll Call

- Present --** 7 - * Jill Nolt, * Andrea Quilici, * Andrew P. Gould, * James W. Klaus, * Emily Smith
, * Chair Andrea Almond and * Max Hepp-Buchanan
- Absent --** 1 - * John Reyna

Approval of Minutes

[UDC MIN 2019-11](#) Minutes of the regular meeting on November 7, 2019

Attachments: [DRAFT UDC MIN 2019-11](#)

A motion was made my Chairwoman Almond, and seconded by Committee Member Smith, that the minutes of the November 7, 2019 meeting be approved. The motion passed by the following vote:

- Aye --** 5 - Jill Nolt, Andrew P. Gould, James W. Klaus, Emily Smith and Chair Andrea Almond
- Abstain --** 2 - Andrea Quilici and Max Hepp-Buchanan

[UDC MIN 2020-03](#) Minutes of the regular meeting on March 5, 2020

Attachments: [DRAFT UDC MIN 2020-03](#)

A motion was made by Chairwoman Almond, and seconded by Committee Member Nolt, that the meeting minutes of the March 5, 2020 meeting be approved. The motion passed by the following vote:

- Aye --** 5 - Andrea Quilici, Andrew P. Gould, James W. Klaus, Chair Andrea Almond and Max Hepp-Buchanan
- Abstain --** 2 - Jill Nolt and Emily Smith

Secretary's Report

Acting Committee Secretary Alex Dandridge: Some projects that were passed by Planning Commission on the Consent Agenda on May 4th: UDC-2020-05, Final location, character and extent review of traffic operation and safety improvements at Maury Street and the I-95 interchange; UDC-2020-06, Final location, character and extent review of the Broad Rock Sports Complex Basketball Court Relocation; and UDC-2020-07, Conceptual location, character and extent review of the Broad Rock Sports Center Indoor Baseball and Outdoor Fitness Facility.

Consideration of Continuances and Deletions from Agenda

CONSENT AGENDA

There are no items on the Consent Agenda

REGULAR AGENDA

1. [UDC 2020-08](#) Conceptual location, character, and extent review of the Fonticello-Carter

Jones Park Master Plan

Attachments: [UDC Report to CPC](#)
[Staff Report to UDC](#)
[Location & Plans](#)
[UDC 2020-08 Public Comment](#)

Committee Member Gould recused himself from reviewing the application, due to his firm's involvement with the project.

The application was presented by Mr. Dandridge

Mr. Dandridge: The project site is approximately 15 acres located at 2813 Bainbridge Street. The site is bordered by Bainbridge Street to the southwest, Perry Street to the northeast, West 29th Street to the southeast, and a residential neighborhood to the northwest. The primary entrance to the park is from Bainbridge Street via a central asphalt access drive that cuts through the center of the park to Perry Street on the north side; however, the drive is currently closed to through traffic. There are sidewalks on three sides of the park along West 29th Street, Perry Street, and Bainbridge Street—and brick pathways within the park itself.

The Department of Parks, Recreation, and Community Facilities (DPRCF) has completed a master plan for the existing Fonticello/Carter Jones Park. The park dates to the early 20th century and the development of the Woodland Heights and Swansboro neighborhoods. Many of the park's facilities need renovations and upgrades to better suit the current needs and wishes of the community. As the park master plan is implemented, DPRCF will return for final review and approval of individual phases of the park redesign.

The park is currently programmed with a pavilion and restrooms, the Fonticello Spring, baseball fields, a playground, small picnic shelters, tennis courts, a skate park, basketball courts, horseshoe pits, a butterfly garden, and permaculture garden/food forest project. These programmatic features will be maintained and most of them will be renovated or relocated, with the exception of the tennis courts and horseshoe pits which will be removed due to community feedback which indicated those were not very popular. The Fonticello Spring is currently closed, as are most or all of the city's historic springs, due to a lack of maintenance and issues with water testing. There is community interest in reopening the spring for use in the future. The park also houses a cell tower, which will remain.

The project team has developed a site program to combine the existing features with new additions:

- A plaza with an overhead shade structure adjacent to the existing pavilion.
- An amphitheater and stage on an existing slope.
- A public art and memorial space to honor the memory of Markiya Dickson. The Markiya Dickson Imagination Zone, with a splash pad and play equipment for younger and older children. The existing play equipment is relatively new and in good shape and can be reused here.
- Relocated basketball courts, placed closer to the interior of the park and buffered with landscaping in the form of a rain garden or bio-retention area.
- An expanded skate park
- A refurbished Fonticello Spring surrounded by a new plaza
- A native plant and pollinator garden with a garden path to replace the existing butterfly garden

- A central multiuse pathway that provides an arterial pedestrian and biking path crossing from the west side to the east side of the park
- A loop trail with skate spots, small skating elements adjoining the path that are intended to draw the skateboarding experience out into other areas of the park, and a running trail crossing the open lawn on the western side of the park - Picnic shelters replacing the existing structures and rearranged across the site
- Rain gardens and/or bio-retention areas that provide for ecologically-sound landscaping and stormwater management
- Bollards for blocking vehicular access and slowing bicycle traffic into the site
- A loop drive formed by part of the footprint of the existing access drive and additional driveway just north of the pavilion
- A storage area for landscape materials to be used in the park and Food Forest and Future expansion and development of the existing Fonticello Food Forest with the addition of a Food Forest Path

Landscaping on site will consist of the preservation of as many healthy trees as possible along with the removal of invasive species and dead or dying trees. Any non-invasive trees that are removed will be replaced. Large and small shade trees, flowering trees, evergreens, and plants that provide four-season interest are proposed throughout the park. A variety of grasses, shrubs, and ground cover will be implemented planted as well as the reseeding of disturbed lawn areas. A native plant and pollinator garden will replace the existing butterfly garden, and planted bioretention areas are proposed that could serve as linear landscape buffers.

Landscape maintenance will primarily belong to DPRCF as the property owner. DPU is responsible for maintaining stormwater best management practices on City-owned properties. Tree care of trees on City-owned property is the responsibility of the Urban Forestry division of the Department of Public Works (DPW). There are also informal groups that have expressed future commitment to maintenance of the park.

Construction is not being proposed by this plan. This is a conceptual review, and full implementation of the proposed improvements could take up to three years with a phased construction process.

The Urban Design Guidelines state that "Successful public parks, both small and large, active or passive, share certain qualities, which include the ability to attract and entertain visitors, access and connectivity to surrounding areas, and safety and comfort" (pg.9). The Fonticello/Carter Jones Park Master Plan proposes amenities that will accommodate a variety of users, and provides access from each side to the surrounding neighborhood.

When referencing park maintenance, the guidelines recommend that "All park projects should include a maintenance plan which addresses all phases of the project" (p.9), and that "Significant healthy trees should be preserved and maintained" (p.10). The conceptual landscape plan for Fonticello/Carter Jones Park includes the preservation of as many healthy trees as possible. The park Maintenance Plan will primarily belong to DPRCF.

The Guidelines recommend that "Landscape plans should include diverse plant species, including evergreen, flowering and shade tree species combined with shrubs, ground covers and annual and perennial plantings. Shade trees for pedestrian comfort should be the predominant plant material in an urban setting" (pg. 9). There are a variety of trees, shrubs, and ground covers that will be incorporated into the landscape plan for Fonticello/Carter Jones Park that will provide shade and four-season interest.

Historic preservation is considered in the Urban Design Guidelines stating that, "Historic elements should be surveyed and preservation should be considered for both facilities and landscapes" (pg. 9). Fonticello/Carter Jones Park is located in the Woodland Heights National Historic District with an era of significance from 1880-1958. The Park includes a pavilion that was constructed in 1946, as well as the Fonticello natural spring and old brick pathways. The Park Master Plan includes the rehabilitation of the pavilion and the historic Fonticello Spring. The old brick pathways will be replaced, as they are in poor condition and unsafe. Repair or repurposing is not feasible, as the brick pathway is held together with mortar, and any removal would cause further damage to the brick.

Fonticello/Carter Jones Park serves as a central public park in the Woodland Heights Neighborhood. In its current condition, the park has a number of aged facilities that no longer meet the needs of the community. The Master Plan responds to community input by proposing upgrades to the existing facilities, such as the expansion of the skate park and Food Forest project, as well as the rehabilitation of the historic Fonticello Spring. A network of new sidewalks and multiuse paths throughout the park will provide easy passage through the grounds for bikers, walkers, and runners.

The plan also responds to the tragic 2019 shooting of Markiya Dickson on park grounds by creating a memorial space and imagination zone in her memory.

Proposed landscaping will provide a variety of shade trees, evergreens, shrubs, bushes, and ground covers that will be utilized in landscaped buffers, bioretention areas, and for four-season interest.

The reorientation of existing features and addition of new features to the park grounds will enhance safety and security and provide opportunities for a greater range of community members to utilize the facility.

Shawn Balon from Timmons Group introduced himself. Mr. Balon stated that Timmons Group were brought into the project by the Department of Parks and Recreation last summer, and have pushed hard to engage with the community, with topics including the recent tragic shooting in the park, and how the park could be improved. Mr. Balon stated that the applicants received a lot of useful community input and intend to gather more as they continue with the project. Mr. Balon stated that they are in agreement with staff about many recommendations, including regarding pervious pavers and bollards.

Ms. Nolt stated that the main walkways crossing the park are designated multi-use, and asked if these, in addition to being for pedestrians, also accommodate service vehicles. Mr. Balon confirmed this.

Ms. Nolt pointed out that all these walkways have bollards, which would restrict vehicle access unless for safety and security a service vehicle needed to enter. Ms. Nolt asked why there are both vehicle and pedestrian paths circling the new central loop, as opposed to being shared, and what design considerations the applicant has given to this area that speak to shared use paths.

Mr. Balon stated that the loop road is mainly for maintenance, but it could have expanded usage during larger events, for public access, food trucks, and pedestrian congregating. Mr. Balon stated that the applicants can look at how to make the main loop more pedestrian-friendly, as they move forward with the project, adding that cost is an issue, so they have looked at how to maintain existing asphalt but also how to keep maintenance costs low. A shared pedestrian and vehicle path with a special cement paving would be good, but cost may be prohibitive.

Ms. Nolt stated that bollard deployment options should be studied further as to how they can control traffic but still allow some public use of the pathways.

Mr. Balon stated that as the applicants look at the width of the path and the deployment of bollards, they want to ensure sufficient space and separation for bicyclists and pedestrians, while taking steps to prevent vehicles from driving onto these areas.

Ms. Nolt stated that the park is highly programmed, but that she did not see a specific area for food carts, and that if this is a regular component of events, it might be helpful to designate an area so that pedestrian walkways are not blocked by them. Mr. Balon stated that the loop road was being considered for the purpose of food truck placement.

Mr. Quilici stated that in an earlier design there was no loop, but instead a service road going from one side to another, north to south. This option did not isolate the pavilion, whereas the loop road seems to create a boundary to getting to the pavilion. Mr. Quilici asked why this earlier option was not chosen.

Mr. Balon stated that the earlier option, which also preserved more existing roadway, was presented to community stakeholders, and they expressed a preference for the loop. The problem with the north-south path is that there is a lot of traffic coming in and out; the public was in favor of the loop road for reducing this traffic.

Mr. Quilici stated that he had thought that the service road, being only used for services and for special events, would not increase traffic; and that the bollards and dedicated service usage would seem to reduce traffic also.

Mr. Quilici suggested that a north-south path might better connect the neighborhood, and be good for cyclists; in general, he felt that this earlier plan was more successful.

Mr. Quilici stated that according to the neighborhood survey included with the application submission, there was no interest in the baseball fields, of which there are two. Mr. Quilici asked if they are used by someone else, and if one of them could be repurposed to something better for the community.

Mr. Balon stated that Parks and Recreation is in the process of working out more programming for the baseball fields.

Mr. Heywood Harrison of Parks and Recreation introduced himself, and stated that the baseball fields are regularly used by groups which may not live in the community, but that they have been kept up and improved over the years, and they are an important part of the Richmond athletic program. This is why their upkeep has been funded, and why they are retained in the plan.

Ms. Almond mentioned a public engagement process diagram which was part of the application submission, and asked about the origin of the many meeting attendees who entered "other" for their neighborhood, despite the many options available. Mr. Balon stated he was not certain; that there was a lot of attendance from the skate park community, some of whom are from Petersburg; and that some were people who had moved away but still had community connections.

Mr. Klaus stated that the designated walks seemed to be brick paths just located around the pavilion. Mr. Balon stated that another brick path follows a diagonal just south of the Fonticello Mountain.

Mr. Klaus observed that the pavilion has a chimney, among its historic features, and stated it would be interesting to acknowledge and preserve and make use of this, and that if the building must be taken down, that the component bricks at least be salvaged and reused. Mr. Klaus mentioned Meadow Park, which had a fundraiser in which community members "adopted" bricks, and suggested that there may be businesses in Manchester that would want to help.

Mr. Quilici asked if the pavilion restoration would include bathrooms, and in general how it would be used. Mr. Balon stated that there are functional bathrooms, though they are not in the best condition.

Mr. Harrison stated that he expected they would renovate the bathrooms at some point, and make them ADA accessible, given the expected increase in park attendance. Mr. Harrison stated that the pavilion is identical to some others in the Richmond park system, and includes 2 restrooms and an open area in between which serves as a gathering or picnic area.

Mr. Balon stated that, as a member of the public just pointed out, there is also an office in the pavilion, which used to be used by the recreation manager when there was one on-site.

Mr. Quilici stated that he liked the proposed small stage area at right center to the pavilion, and asked if the pavilion or plaza could be redesigned so the stage area has two sides with two stage areas, one smaller and more intimate, and one for larger events.

Mr. Quilici suggested that there be park access at the northwest corner, and that this connect somehow to the loop, pointing out that given the convenience of the location, people might enter this way by cutting across the grass if there is no path.

Mr. Quilici asked if there had been a survey of existing trees and their conditions. Mr. Balon stated that this had not been done. Mr. Quilici recommended this be done. Mr. Harrison stated that, when the construction drawing phase is reached for park renovations, a tree survey will definitely be done, as this is routine.

Regarding art in the park, Mr. Quilici suggested that there be a dedicated area in the park devoted to local artists, and that it be changeable so there can be rotating exhibits every few years or so. Mr. Balon stated that the applicants would be looking into options and suggestions for art installation.

Mr. Dandridge stated that Mr. Balon confirmed that Parks and Recreation is open to identifying and expanding portions of the park for public art or interactive art or installations.

Mr. Harrison stated that art inclusion in neighborhood parks is important to him, and that another park project in Jackson Ward he has been working on has dedicated display areas, and that he expects this will be done for the current project as well.

Ms. Carey Jones asked that meeting attendees not use the meeting text feature during the meeting, as due to FOIA guidelines this cannot be included in the minutes.

Mr. Vaughn Garland stated that he lives 2 blocks from the park. Mr. Garland stated that he applauds the current plan for its community involvement, and that it has been fantastic to have a voice in the process.

Mr. Garland stated that he has been researching the park, and that it developed originally around the spring on the grounds, which was an open public space. Mr. Garland stated that reconnecting to that history by reopening the spring for public access and as a public gathering place has been a popular idea among the neighborhood. This area was also historically used for events, including parties, lectures, and presentations. A cross-street was removed, as Mr. Garland understands, to allow more space in this park region for such activities.

Mr. Garland stated that skaters are the main users of the park, and that they are active in park maintenance such as picking up trash. The park is a valuable resource for them and for beginning skaters. Another popular usage has been large field activities such as soccer and even quidditch.

Mr. Garland suggested that the pathways, as has been discussed, should be partly open to skaters, so that the park can be traversed on skates.

Mr. Garland stated that community feedback indicated a desire for less vehicular traffic and parking in the park, and that there have been issues with parking being done at non-approved spots, for example on the playing fields.

Mr. Hepp-Buchanan asked Mr. Garland if he was advocating for any specific changes to the plan in its current form. Mr. Garland stated that there was some concern about how to get food trucks in during events. Mr. Garland stated that there is an eagerness to engage with artists within the space.

Ms. Laney Sullivan, park neighbor and co-founder of the Fonticello Food Forest, stated that she would like to discuss traffic flow in the Food Forest space with the applicants, as this will affect a project to which she has devoted a lot of time and thought.

Ms. Sullivan stated that there are some mulberry and persimmon trees which are especially nice and that she hopes they will be preserved, and that Matthew Daniel, who maintains the Butterfly Park, be consulted about work on that part of the Park.

Ms. Sullivan expressed concern that during renovations the park will be completely shut down, and asked that the work be phased so that the park can remain open.

Ms. Sullivan stated that the person managing baseball activities was removed, and there is public sentiment in favor of bringing him back, as he was a major community organizer in the park.

Ms. Sullivan stated that she is not opposed to the moving of the basketball court, but that, if cost is an issue, she wonders why it is being done, since there is already an impervious paving surface, as well as lighting and fencing, in the northwest corner of the park.

Ms. Sullivan stated that the cell tower in the park is not popular, and asked if free wifi or some other compensation in the park could be offered for the public.

Ms. Amy Robins, with Councilor Stephanie Lynch's office, introduced herself and stated that she and the Councilor live near the park. Ms. Robins stated that Timmons Group has done a great job with engaging the public in the development of the park master plan, and that the park is shared by two neighborhoods, Woodland Park and Swansboro. Ms. Robins stated that reducing vehicle access and the prior practice of motorists jumping

the curb has increased safety in the park, as well as the ubiquity of skaters who act as “eyes” in the park. Ms. Robins stated that the playground equipment is suitable for younger children, 8 and under, but having amenities of interest to older children would be positive, and such amenities would be well-used due to a nearby school and child residents.

Ms. Robins stated that Markiya Dickson’s mother has expressed appreciation for the work Timmons and the Parks Department has done to improve the park and to memorialize her daughter with fun activities for children.

Mr. Hepp-Buchanan stated that he likes the inclusion of skating amenities throughout the park, but pointed out that the use of pervious surfaces may conflict with skaters’ needs, as the skaters may require concrete or asphalt. Mr. Quilici suggested that there be double paths, with the impermeable surface dedicated for skaters and thus ensuring separation. Mr. Balon stated that this will be kept in mind, and also the role of materials in signaling path hierarchies.

Ms. Smith stated that the park should be as accessible as possible, and that this should be balanced with as much preserved greenery as possible.

Mr. Hepp-Buchanan asked whether the project would come back for final approval by UDC. Mr. Dandridge stated that specific components of the plan as they come up for construction will be reviewed piecemeal by UDC.

A motion was made by Committee Member Hepp-Buchanan, and seconded by Committee Member Klaus, that this conceptual location, character, and extent review item be approved with the following conditions:

- Pedestrian bollards not be utilized within the interior of the park, and other design measures be considered in preventing vehicle ingress in locations where service vehicle access is not needed.
- The applicant consider pervious paving in the material selection for the sidewalks and multi-use paths within the park, except where skating elements are being proposed, and a harder surface material is more appropriate.
- As new signage is proposed within the park, it be consistent in material and design that is sensitive to the character of the surrounding historic neighborhood.
- The applicant identify appropriate locations in the park for new bike parking facilities.

The motion passed by the following vote:

Aye -- 6 - Jill Nolt, Andrea Quilici, James W. Klaus, Emily Smith , Chair Andrea Almond and Max Hepp-Buchanan

Excused -- 1 - Andrew P. Gould

OTHER BUSINESS

Proposed Membership Language/Zoning Change Update

Mr. Dandridge stated that Ms. Anne Darby of the Planning and Preservation division hopes to begin the process for ordinance which includes the proposed UDC membership changes next week. The review and voting process should conclude by early July.

UDC Guidelines Update

Ms. Almond suggested that Mr. Dandridge send out Guidelines revisions in their current

state, then members review on their own time, and some time at the June meeting be dedicated to discussion of those revisions. Mr. Dandridge stated that he will review and edit the Guidelines notes prepared by Mr. Joshua Son before sending it out to UDC members.

Mr. Quilici stated that deadlines for the changes being discussed would be helpful. Ms. Almond stated that she and Alex could put together a timeline and share it at the next UDC meeting.

Adjournment

Committee member Almond adjourned the meeting at 11:19 AM.