



CITY OF RICHMOND

Department of Planning & Development Review *Staff Report*

Ord. No. 2021-238: To grant an open-space easement on the City-owned property generally known as Lewis G. Larus Park to the Virginia Outdoors Foundation.

To: City Planning Commission
From: Land Use Administration
Date: September 20, 2020

PETITIONER

Christopher E. Frelke, Director of Parks, Recreation & Community Facilities

LOCATION

Lewis G. Larus Park, frontage on West Huguenot Road and Stony Point Road

PURPOSE

To authorize the Acting Chief Administrative Officer or a designee to execute, for and on behalf of the City, a deed of open-space easement to place the real property of Lewis G. Larus Park (Larus Park) under permanent conservation easement, thereby adding additional long-term protections to the property.

SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION

Larus Park – located on Huguenot Road in the City's Southside – continues to see increased visits to the park. In addition, both commercial and residential development is increasing in the areas surrounding the Park. These developments put pressure on the Park in a number of ways, including but not limited to: increasing storm water run-off into the Park, reducing wildlife habitat adjacent to the Park through clearing for construction, and the creation of an increased number of unofficial social trails into the Park from surrounding neighborhoods. Placing Larus Park under a permanent conservation easement will help to protect and preserve the natural character of the park for the use and enjoyment of future generations.

Staff recommends approval of the request.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Site Description

Larus Park is a wooded, natural park comprising a total of 108.848 acres. The Park is made up of the following five parcels:

C0010891016 - 8850 W. Huguenot Road, Richmond, VA 23235
C0010891018 - 8776 W. Huguenot Road, Richmond, VA 23235
C0010891056 - 8850A W. Huguenot Road, Richmond, VA 23235
C0010757046 - 8778 Rear W. Huguenot Road, Richmond, VA 23235
C0010530001 - 3900 Beechmont Road, Richmond, VA 23235

A 1.164 acre portion of parcel C0010891016 is currently leased by the City to the County of Chesterfield by the Deed of Ground Lease dated April 1, 2018 and a 0.044 acre portion of this parcel is disconnected by such leased 1.164 acre portion. Therefore, the aggregate of 107.640 acres will comprise the open-space easement.

The park has no significant development or built infrastructure but has a system of trails primarily used by recreational trail users. It is popular with walkers, runners, cyclists, bird watchers and dog-walkers. There is one small parking area, five small footbridges and approximately six miles of natural-surface trail in the Park. The Park has seen an increase in usage in recent years. In addition, there is increasing development on all sides of the Park, both residential and commercial. The department of Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities (DPRCF) worked with the Virginia Outdoor Foundation (VOF) to create a conservation easement document that would provide permanent protection for the Park while still allowing DPRCF to maintain and utilize the park as they see fit.

Proposed Use of the Property

Continued use as a city park

Richmond 300 Master Plan

The *Richmond 300* Master Plan recommends a future land use as Public Open Space which is defined as “Public and quasi-public parks, recreation areas, open spaces, and cemeteries.” The development style includes passive and active recreation, natural habitats, cemeteries, and large plazas. Access is designed in a manner to allow access by all modes of transportation, while emphasizing connections to bicycle and pedestrian amenities, such as sidewalks, bike lanes, and shared-use paths. Bike parking and other such amenities are provided as well.

Primary Uses: Open space.

Secondary Uses: Cultural, institutional and governmental. (p. 70)

Zoning

The current zoning for this property is R-2, Single-Family Residential.

Surrounding Area

The property is located between Stony Point Fashion Park and Stony Point Shopping Center, with residential and office uses present as well.

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