



Fiscal Affairs Advisory Commission
Report to the County Board

FY 2024 Proposed Budget

Budget Area	Department of Parks and Recreation
FAAC Reviewers	John Tuohy; Andrew Graykowski
Date of FAAC Action	March 14, 2023
Presented By	Peter Robertson

FAAC OPINION

FAAC Recommendation #1			
<p>FAAC recommends the County Board adopt the County Manager’s proposed budget for the Department of Parks and Recreation, with special consideration to increasing programming especially for (1) youth under 18, and their families, as an integral part of the County’s holistic approach to address the opioid epidemic; (2) those who face cultural and language barriers that prevent access to such programs, and (3) to meet increasing demand.</p>			
Vote	Yes: 14	No: 0	Abstain:0
Comments			

Future Considerations

FAAC would like to thank the Department of Parks and Recreation for their willingness to answer questions and share requested information.

FAAC implores the County Board to consider, note, and implement plans for the following future considerations:

1. DPR experienced IT issues with their summer camp registration system. DPR is increasingly dependent on those systems to engage and open programs to the public. However, such systems present complex demands on DPR IT staff, which cannot meet those demands. FAAC recommends the County Board provide IT resources to this department.

2. The health and charm of our forests and parks are integral to our community. Invasive plant management is a necessary, but dynamic and ever-present process that requires multi-year treatment plans to be successful and lasting. FAAC recommends the County Board require an annual appropriation dedicated to this project in lieu of one-time appropriations.
3. Bidding for federal funding is competitive and Arlington is seeing some abatement in this area. FAAC recommends the County Board prioritize federal funding for future projects earlier in order to be more competitive for such funding.
4. The upcoming Forestry and Natural Resources Plan (FNRP) will be a guidepost to DPR to begin projects and studies associated with the plan. To assist in giving DPR a more consistent and efficient annual budget, FAAC recommends the County Board establish a line item in the budget for studies anticipated by the FNRP. In addition, FAAC recommends the County Board prioritize projects within the FNRP and differentiate them into Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) projects and DPR operating budget projects where feasible.
5. The County's nature centers have had cut-backs, primarily due to the COVID-19 pandemic. These establishments are an integral part of education and inspiration for Arlington residents. FAAC recommends the County Board provide the funding necessary to address the staffing issues at the nature centers in order to return them to pre-pandemic operation levels.
6. DPR staff are aware of the decline in the numbers of volunteers from 9,000 pre-Covid to 3,000 currently. The FAAC encourages DPR to develop a robust volunteer recruitment and retention program which will supplement paid staffing to enable more programming.
7. FAAC recommends the Board require a program that can enhance trail quality by first and foremost measuring trail quality (similar to the pavement condition index for streets), second, renovating our trails, and finally, hiring or reallocating staff resources towards a dedicated staff member with expertise in trail design and management.