



## **POPS Advisory Committee Meeting Summary**

December 20, 2016

6:30pm-9:30pm

Courthouse

### **In attendance:**

#### **POPS Advisory Committee**

- Caroline Haynes, Park and Recreation Commission
- Jane Rudolph, Department of Parks and Recreation
- Jane Siegel, Planning Commission
- Dean Amel, Urban Forestry Commission
- Heather Cocozza, Sports Commission
- Claire O'Dea, E2C2
- Lisa Grandle, Department of Parks and Recreation
- Toby Smith, At Large
- Carrie Johnson, At Large
- Leo Sarli, Arlington Commission for the Arts (Alternate)
- Richard Epstein, Park and Recreation Commission (Alternate)
- Jim Feaster, NCAC

### **Absent:**

- William Gillen, APS
- Elizabeth Gearin, Park and Recreation Commission
- Janet Kopenhaver, Arlington Commission for the Arts

### **Department of Parks and Recreation Staff:**

- Erik Beach
- Irena Lazic
- Bethany Heim



**Summary:**

On December 20, 2016, WRT facilitated a meeting with the POPS Advisory Committee to test and get feedback on draft Land Acquisition Criteria for the County to use when considering acquiring public space through in-fee processes. After a brief presentation, committee members split into groups and used the draft criteria to score four hypothetical acquisition sites.

In general, committee members expressed a desire for more explicitly defined criteria to reduce subjectivity in interpretation.

Some committee members raised the question of how this criteria and policy would relate to the guidelines put forth in the Community Facilities Study. It was clarified that these criteria should be considered complementary to CFS guidelines—only pertaining to land that will be used as public space and are not as comprehensive as the scope of the CFS.

So as to not supersede the public input process and to provide flexibility, it was suggested that criteria pertaining to the intended use of a site could be broadened by replacing the phrase “the site will be used to...” with “the site could/has the potential to be used to...”

It was suggested that the criteria account for a “hybrid” property that has equal potential value across categories in Part III. There was also discussion of a potential fourth sub-section for “urban relief” value, which would apply to spaces that would act as urban plazas and other interstitial spaces that may or may not be interpreted as having recreation value.

Some members considered the possibility of using these criteria for preservation purposes as well. In this context, the County could acquire land that has natural resource value in the preservation of a critical habitat or other resource, even if the land is not publicly accessible. The question arose of how this concept would relate to the County’s policies around conservation easements.

In discussing historic properties, it was mentioned that often the presence of a registered historic structure renders the property unalterable and so the County decides against acquisition for parks and public space. This scenario will need to be incorporated into the criteria while also leaving room for a property to be scored positively due to its historic value. It was suggested that a criterion could be added that awards a point if the acquisition of a property is essential to the expansion of an existing park, regardless of said expansion is outlined in an existing plan.

Committee members were also asked to vote on how much weight should be given to the three parts of the criteria. In general, it was felt that the most weight should be given to Part III. Members were amenable to the idea of assigning a weight to each sub-section of all three parts.

The committee also discussed the question of how much weight should be given to acquisitions that are specified in a County Board-approved plan or Neighborhood Conservation Plan, especially if the plans were adopted some time ago. The committee agreed the relevance of the plan to today’s circumstances is more important than the age of the plan. The committee also recognized that the pursuit of public space not currently identified in an existing sector or other plan could open the possibility of re-evaluating that plan, which could be very challenging.