

Dear Bill,

On behalf of both the Shirlington and Douglas Park Civic Associations (CA's), we are transmitting (see attached) our views about the proposed Jennie Dean Park (JDP) design concepts posted by its JDP committee. We do this because the Parks & Recreation Commission decided to vote on these concepts last week, without notice and in advance of the 4MRV Working Group. We are the other two civic associations on the WG. Others wanted to be involved. Fairlington, among others, asked for a seat and was denied. This is a big Valley.

In reviewing JDP park concepts, let's all be cautious in assuming WETA will sell its property on 27th Street South and leave the center of the park. It is not at all clear what WETA will decide to do or when, but it won't be known for quite some time to come. The Letter of Intent is non-binding. WETA is evaluating several options including reinvesting in the large Production Center property that it owns.

A few points:

- The Shirlington Civic Association has tried for the sake of transparency to submit its views about the park master plan in writing over the past 2 years. Douglas Park Civic Association has also; its specific comments were somehow left out of the JDP committee report, some of them concerning park use by its large Latino community. These may have missed the attention of the PRC but are posted on the project website and on ours as well.
- After years of delay in master planning, all three civic associations insisted that PRD show the park deliverables in Phase 1 (immediate) and Phase 2 (near-term), which they don't usually do for a master plan. We applauded them for this. The PRC should too - it represents a step forward in park planning.
- Just to be clear, Concept 1 is not the same as the Staff proposal that was included in the 4MRV Policy Framework. Indeed, there are major differences. The JDP Committee tried to address Nauck's concerns by: flipping the small and large diamond fields, reducing the space around them and calling for partial/overlap fencing, all this in order to reduce the footprint of the ballfield closest to that community and increase casual-use open space near S. Four Mile Run Drive. The larger softball field in its new location faces Shirlington windows directly, which is acceptable only if all lights for both fields are replaced for new technology.
- In deference to Nauck Civic Association's strong preference, the playground has been moved from a sheltered position in the center of the park and will now look out on busy S. Four Mile Run Drive. At least it will be close to the Little League field and bathrooms. The JDP committee also found ways to

- include a basketball and one tennis court in Phase 1, all of this per the Charge from the County Board.
- The committee seems to have tried hard to come up with an alternative, Concept 2, with no ballfield fencing near Nauck at all. This, however, created new problems. It left fenced basketball and tennis courts looking at this edge of Nauck instead and engendered a visibly awkward arrangement of facilities and pathways in the center of the park on a so-called "temporary" basis that could turn out to be permanent.
 - Concept 2 also ends up depriving the Little League of a new baseball diamond with proper amenities, keeps the old field lights glaring at Shirlington, keeps old rusty fencing cutting people off from the stream, and prevents mitigation on the RPA - all for years to come and perhaps longer than that. Yet the funds are available in the CIP to remedy all of this.

Thank you for sharing this information with the Commissioners. We apologize to the JDP Committee for stating these views before seeing its presentation on April 12 but we want to respond to the PRC in real time. As a former member of the PRC, I want to assure them of our commitment to creating the best park possible, to which end all of us have worked very hard for over two years. We are out in these 4MRV park areas every day and love them. We want to do the best by the area, for everyone's future enjoyment. Hard choices do not reflect a lack of good will. In fact, the opposite.

Adam and I are happy to answer any questions.

Respectfully submitted,

Edie Wilson, President, Shirlington Civic Association
Adam Henderson, President, Douglas Park Civic Association

4MRV – Jennie Dean Park Issues
Community Reaction from Shirlington and Douglas Park
as of April 3, 2018

Overall

- **Arlington parks are for everyone.** Creating an expanded, renovated 12 – 15 acre Jennie Dean Park (JDP) is the result of years of planning and millions of dollars in park bond funds for land acquisition, all approved by the County Board and voters multiple times.
- **Serve the needs of all** – JDP will attract people from many different backgrounds from all over the County and especially from South Arlington multi-family developments.
- **Honor the past, build for the future** – Arlington should not forget that our parks were segregated and that only JDP was available to African-Americans. The history of the park area should be evident in its design, main entrance on Four Mile Run Drive, art, and in historical markers. Its new facilities should, however, reflect the needs of current and future residents, families and children.
- **“The community” should refer to the needs of the community of all the neighborhoods surrounding the Valley master planning area.** Three civic associations sit on the 4MRV Working Group for this reason and others are in easy walking distance. Douglas Park, Barcroft, Claremont and Fairlington residents all walk to the three parks (Jennie Dean, Dog Park and Shirlington Park in this area. Jennie Dean Park is literally on the boundary line with Shirlington, which has no parks or playground and where all residents live in multi-family housing with no yards of their own. (Shirlington Park is, oddly, not in Shirlington.)
- **Use scarce tax dollars well** - Make the best use of available County funding as soon as possible and take into account that County finances and bonding authority face severe constraints in the future due to school construction, public transportation, and changing commercial real estate.
- **Value the local economy** - Make sensible economic development decisions, respecting and supporting existing businesses until such time as they wish to change. This includes keeping WETA in the area.

There are now two concepts for the park master plan that have been refined by the JDP committee. Both are shown with two phases. Phase 1 refers to what can be done in FY19-FY20 with \$14.5 million in capital funds already allocated. Phase 2 for each option is supposed to be “near-term,” as in the next 5 -10 years, with no funds yet allocated in the CIP and no certainty as to the purchase of the WETA Production Center. The following analysis compares Concept 1 with Concept 2, and then provides detailed comments and questions on issues still in need of work.

JDP Committee Concept 1, Phase 1

- **Strong design with well-functioning, attractive layout meeting many needs**
- **Best, soonest use** of \$14.5 million in County bond funds allocated in FY19 – FY-20 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)
- **Builds ALL park amenities in Phase 1** except a 2nd tennis court; amenities not built in Phase 1 may face extended delays.
- **Replaces ALL of the oldest field lights in County with “dark-sky” tech lights with reduced spillage, automatic turn-off – a big issue for all residents surrounding the park**
- Phase 2 (tennis court and expanded open space) depends on a tear-down of WETA/PBS Production Center – not clear if/when this happens -- WETA may need to stay on its. 27th Street South property
- Direct, pleasant paved pathway through the park connecting stream side open space on the south side with new playground location and open space on north side near S Four Mile Run Drive
- Removes old rusty fencing, expands green space, increases tree canopy, allows unfettered access to stream views with a riparian path
- Provides a brand new Little League diamond field and amenities near Nelson Street, close to playground and restrooms, with convenient drop-off/pick-up for kids. This is especially important for families with young children of different ages, as parents can easily keep an eye on kids on both the playground as well as watch their child play on the Little League field.
- Builds a new adult softball field facing the south side of the park
- Adequate parking arrangements still not clear.

JDP Committee Concept 2, Phase 1

- **An awkward design compromise with an indefinite, possibly unachievable future and higher costs**
- Only reason to consider Phase 1 is to get to Phase 2
- Phase 2 depends on a tear-down of WETA/PBS Production Center building – not clear if/when this happens because WETA may need to stay on its 27th Street South property
- Key park amenities are not built until Phase 2 including new Little League field and large picnic shelter – may face years of delay
- Leaves a "temporary" Little League baseball field imposed on the existing softball field footprint, with "minimal renovations, minimal amenities" indefinitely or permanently – means Little League will be in the middle of the park in the evening far from parking, no access to playground for younger kids
- Leaves this diamond field in RPA indefinitely and delays opportunities for replacement of some trees (removed to build adult softball field) and restoration of riparian stream buffer
- Builds a new adult softball field with new "dark-sky" field lights, but leaves another set of the oldest field lights in the County glaring at Shirlington residents
- Awkward layout offers a confusing, twisting, awkward "temporary" path through the park to new playground location for families and visitors approaching from Shirlington side– this is a major issue
- Most of the unattractive, rusty old fencing may remain "temporarily" (indefinitely), cutting off walking access along the stream as well as the western side of the stream bank.
- Adequate parking arrangements still not clear.

Remaining Issues

1. Assumptions regarding the WETA/PBS Production Center in the park –Both JDP Committee Concepts (like previous park design concepts) assume that the Production Center will leave the park and that it will do so relatively soon, thus offering a very different, expanded park design. This is a mis-reading of the Non-Binding Letter of Intent. WETA is conducting a feasibility study evaluating three options. It is not clear that the production center will be sold or if sold, when. No decision is expected for some time; no funds have been raised for a new digital broadcast facility estimated at \$25 million.
2. The Concept 2, Phase 1 proposal leaves in place, indefinitely, perhaps permanently, and altogether unnecessarily, the oldest field lights in the County. These lights (wide spillage, manual turn-off that frequently leaves lights on very late or overnight) would continue to face Shirlington on a “temporary” Little League baseball diamond field indefinitely.
3. Define and include improvements to both the north and southern park entrances as part of the Phase 1 work plan. Improve the southern entrance and paint the worn-out, badly designed footbridge. Install way-finding signage throughout the area in Phase 1, including on both sides of the footbridge and near Walter Reed Drive for Douglas Park (in both Spanish and English).
4. The playground location was moved from the shelter of the center of the park to the north side along S Four Mile Run Drive, in deference to Nauck Civic Association’s preference. It is at least close enough to a new Little League field and new bathrooms per Option 1, Phase 1, to make this functional for families. Its presence next to the WETA Production Center, other private properties, and an abbreviated 27th Street South needs more thought, especially in terms of parking (see below).
5. The Transportation elements need more discussion and should not be accepted as viable parking solutions at this time. We believe that “if we build it, they will come,” meaning more visitors will be attracted to the area. 4MRV Parking for increased activity in Jennie Dean Park and the “arts and industry district” area is still unclear, unrealistic and inadequate.

Two examples:

- a. County staff has suggested that there is available public parking in two Shirlington garages on S Quincy Street. Both of them are the farthest distance from entrances to Jennie Dean and even further from Theater on the Run and other events at 3700 S Four Mile Run Drive. This public parking is available only in the evening – is staff proposing

that visitors use these garages for evening sports and arts events within 4MRV? If so, how would visitors get there?

- Via Arlington Mill Drive and over the footbridge? There is currently no Phase I plan for lighting or improvements to the existing unlit footbridge, very dark bus stop, or to the Shirlington side of the pathway. No new pedestrian bridge closer to these garages is included in the design. This is a long walk.
- Or via Shirlington Road and S Four Mile Run Drive? Walking from these garages to the park along Shirlington Road is confusing, unattractive and not entirely safe due to narrow pedestrian paths and sidewalks, sprawling intersections and tricky crossing areas for years to come. Also a long walk.
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b. Status of 27th Street South in Concept 1, Phase 1 – Shortening this road may work but has input been sought from PBS staff? How this will work out for their business needs? Will families start to park on this street to access the new playground; if so, will this cause problems for the evening newscast production staff? Same issue for Little League field. – will 27th Street South be used by ball player families and how will that work? Surely there will have to be a turn-around at the end of an abbreviated 27th Street South? This needs more thought as well.

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