

Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Boulevard, Suite 300
Arlington VA 22201

July 7, 2016

Dear Ms Garvey, Mr. Fiset, Mr. Vihstadt, Mr. Dorsey and Ms. Cristol:

The Arlington Sports Commission supports recreational opportunities for our growing population and appreciates the time The Friends of the Skate Park have spent answering questions and briefing the Sports Commission on Powhatan Springs Park (the skate board park).

During discussions of the skate park, Commission members have noted that the park provides recreational opportunities to youth who may not be participating in other recreational programs, such as soccer, baseball, or football. Thus, the Commission does see value in continuing to provide a skate park in Arlington. However, Commission members have **questioned whether the expected project costs are too high relative to the number of people who use the facility**. The estimated project cost is \$2.2 million. The park is estimated to serve about 1,100 skaters in Arlington. Moreover, unlike other sports facility users, skate park users are not charged any type of fee. User fees were collected at some point in the past at the skate park, but the cost of staffing the facility to collect fees outweighed the benefit of collecting fees.

Further, the Commission is extremely disappointed that the current park is in need of replacement so soon after being constructed. The lifespan of a skate park is 20-30 years, but the Powhatan Springs park only lasted 10 years, and the need for constant repairs began even earlier in the park's lifespan. Therefore, the Commission strongly hopes and expects that any new facility would be installed properly and would remain in good condition for several decades.

If the County Board approves this line item in the Parks Maintenance Capital Project List in the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), the Commission has the following suggestions:

1. Department of Parks & Recreation (DPR) should consider methods to reduce the cost of a replacement facility. Original replacement estimates ranged from \$500,000 to \$2 million. Why is the final estimate at the very upper end of the range, and are there more affordable design options that could be considered?
2. DPR should explore ways to collect fees for use of the skate park. Perhaps with Arlington's population growth, there will be an increased interest which would now support a type of user fee model. If having staff on site may not be feasible, perhaps a yearly pass with random compliance checks would work.
3. Given the problems experienced with the first skate park, we believe this project might be a candidate for an audit. It is important that we understand what went wrong with the first skate park so that the Skate Park of 2017 does not result in the same outcomes as the decrepit Skate Park of 2004.

In summary, while the Commission supports the skate park, we also ask the County Board to consider fiscal conservatism in moving forward with this project.

Sincerely,

Heather Coccozza, Chair of the Arlington County Sports Commission