

Donaldson Run Recreation Association, Inc.

P.O. Box 7023
Arlington, VA 22207

December 22, 2010

Dear Donaldson Run Members:

Thank you to all our members who attended the 2010 annual Donaldson Run Recreation Association members meeting on December 8th. In addition to conducting DRRA's regular annual meeting business, we had a good discussion about Donaldson Run's long-range facilities needs and the Long-Range Facilities Planning Committee's recommendations for facilities repairs and improvements. The members present at the meeting unanimously endorsed the Planning Committee's recommended approach.

For those who were unable to attend the members meeting, we want to take this opportunity to provide a report on the facilities planning discussion and let you know about the plan for next steps in the facilities planning and development process. Attached is a brief summary of the presentation we made at the members meeting. The full report and additional information can be found at the Planning section of the Donaldson Run website (www.DRRA.org).

The Planning Committee's recommended concept plan for facilities repairs and improvements is informed by considerable feedback received from our members through a survey and informal consultations around the pool. The committee also has observed the state and local laws and regulations that impose significant limitations on development on our site.

We hope our presentation at the December 8th meeting, and this report, provide our members an understanding of how the Planning Committee arrived at its recommended concept plan, but of course we anticipate that members will have additional questions and comments on the plan. We continue to welcome feedback in all forms and encourage our members to contact us or other members of the Planning Committee. Contact information is provided at the end of the report.

As explained in the report, we will convene a DRRA members meeting in approximately three months. At that meeting we will present to the members for consideration and approval a final facilities repair and improvement plan based on the Planning Committee's concept plan, together with a funding plan. Stay tuned for details of that meeting and please plan to attend.

Given the current conditions of DRRA's facilities, the need to improve the safety and usefulness of our facilities, and the present market opportunity to get good value from contractors and suppliers if we act relatively soon, we think now is the time to act. We look forward to working with our members to undertake facilities repairs and improvements that will serve our members and guests for years to come.

We wish you and your families a wonderful holiday season and a happy and healthy new year.

Mike Griffen
President
michael.griffen@gmail.com

Patricia Connally
Vice President
ptconnally@gmail.com

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Report on the Donaldson Run Facilities Planning Process

December 2010

The Long-Range Facilities Planning Committee has been busy working behind the scenes since 2008. After much effort, numerous informal consultations with members, meetings with county officials, and extensive work with architects and engineers who have provided expert assistance, the Planning Committee prepared the recommended concept plan for facilities improvements presented at the December 8th members meeting. Previously, the DRRRA Board of Directors endorsed the concept plan.

In its December 8th presentation to the members, the Planning Committee provided an overview of the current state of DRRRA's facilities; reported on recent work undertaken on DRRRA's facilities; summarized the feedback received from Arlington County zoning and planning officials during meetings this past summer; identified the planning criteria that has guided the committee's development of a recommended facilities concept plan; and outlined its recommended facilities concept plan.

DRRA's Existing Facilities

The Planning Committee, with input from architects and engineers who have provided expert assistance, has assessed the condition of Donaldson Run's existing facilities. The Planning Committee identifies the following positive and negative characteristics of our existing facilities:

Swimming Pools

- **Positive:** The main pool is 50+ years old, is well-maintained, and in very good physical condition
- **Positive:** An engineering assessment conducted in 2009 found the main pool to be in "very good structural condition"
- **Positive:** The pumphouse and pool infrastructure is sound
- **Negative:** The main pool's diving well does not meet current standards for depth and length, posing a risk of injury to divers
- **Negative:** Neither the main nor the baby pool is readily accessible to disabled swimmers

Bathhouse

- **Positive:** The bathhouse is functional
- **Positive:** The bathhouse's design satisfies basic needs for rest room and changing areas, snack bar, office space
- **Negative:** The bathhouse requires significant repairs to roof, support pillars, and plumbing
- **Negative:** The bathhouse locker rooms are heavily worn and need renovations to surfaces and fixtures

- **Negative:** The locker rooms offer limited accommodations to disabled members and guests or families with young children
- **Negative:** The snack bar configuration constrains its menu and provides limited sitting area

Accessibility for Disabled

- **Positive:** The bathhouse features accessible showers and toilet stalls
- **Negative:** The pools lack accessibility features for disabled swimmers
- **Negative:** The bathhouse lacks an accessible family restroom
- **Negative:** DRRA's steeply-sloped topography is not friendly to the disabled

DRRA's Grounds

- **Positive:** DRRA's setting is beautiful and unique
- **Positive:** The DRRA member survey establishes maintenance and preservation of our grounds as a very high priority
- **Negative:** DRRA's grounds could support additional amenities, such as an **upgraded** picnic area and additional play features
- **Negative:** DRRA's existing lighting is inefficient and relatively ineffective
- **Negative:** DRRA's trees and plantings require significant upkeep

Consultations with Arlington County Officials

During the summer of 2010, members of the Planning Committee took advantage of the opportunity to meet with the Arlington County Zoning Director and with members of the County's planning and environmental services departments to gain an understanding of the regulatory and legal requirements DRRA would face in the context of any significant facilities improvements. From those meetings, we understand the following:

- DRRA has significant flexibility to undertake bathhouse and grounds improvements, albeit subject to setback requirements and other routing zoning code limitations.
- We have very limited ability to undertake pool improvements other than for safety and access purposes
 - Our pool predates the enactment of the Arlington County Zoning Code and so the County does not insist on full compliance with the current code
 - Under the current Zoning Code, our parking lot is "non-conforming" because it is not paved and is undersized relative to code requirements that tie the requisite size of the parking lot to the water surface area of the pool
 - Any expansion to the surface area of the pool, other than modest size increases resulting from improvements for safety or accessibility, would trigger a requirement to conform the parking lot to current Zoning Code requirements

- To conform with current Zoning Code requirements for parking, we would be obligated to significantly increase the footprint of the lot and to pave it
- Paving the parking lot would trigger extensive work and expense to manage parking lot storm water runoff
- Under Virginia law, the County does not have the authority to grant a waiver or variance of the parking lot requirements under the Zoning Code.
- The county can be expected to mandate accessibility upgrades if we undertake any significant facilities projects
- Proximity to the stream adjoining the back of DRRA’s property imposes significant limits on development. Under applicable Chesapeake Bay Preservation Area Designation and Management Regulations, we are not permitted to locate any structures or hardscape improvements within 100 feet of the stream, a restriction that places a significant portion of the grassy area of our property off-limits to development activities.
- County administrators will try to be reasonable in working with DRRA on zoning and planning issues, but the Zoning Code allows them only limited flexibility

Facilities Planning Criteria

As a prelude to its development of a recommended concept plan for facilities repairs and improvements, the Planning Committee identified four (4) planning criteria to guide its work:

1. Facilities should support core functions of DRRA:

To promote the health and general welfare of its members and in pursuance thereof to develop, operate, maintain and manage a swimming pool and other social and recreational facilities

~DRRA Bylaws

2. Facilities should be safe
3. Facilities should be user-friendly and accessible to all members and guests
4. Facilities should be efficient and economic

Recommended Concept Plan for Facilities Repairs and Improvements

Based on its work to date and consistent with the Facilities Planning Criteria, the Planning Committed identified four priorities for Donaldson Run facilities repairs and improvements:

Priority 1: Pool safety and accessibility upgrades

Priority 2: Bathhouse improvements

Priority 3: Accessibility improvements

Priority 4: Grounds improvements and upkeep

In accord with those priorities, the Planning Committee recommends the following facilities repairs and improvements at Donaldson Run pool:

Priority 1: Pool Safety and Accessibility

1. Consistent with DRRA’s commitment to safety, we would renovate the pool’s diving well to make it consistent with Arlington County and FINA standards (FINA, the international governing body of swimming, diving, and other water sports, promulgates standards for swimming and diving facilities)
 - a. The reconfigured diving well would be deeper and longer to improve safety
 - b. Project will help preserve access to liability insurance coverage
2. Consistent with DRRA’s commitment to make our facilities accessible and available to all our members and guests and in recognition that applicable regulatory requirements mandate accessibility, we would add accessibility features to the pool. Based on our understanding of legal requirements, the Planning Committee expects it to be necessary to add two different forms of access to people with disabilities. Our options could include the following:
 - a. Shallow end accessible stairways and benches
 - b. Access ramp
 - c. Mechanical lift

Priority 2: Bathhouse Improvements

1. Consistent with DRRA’s commitment to make its facilities safe, user-friendly, accessible, efficient, and economic, we would repair and renovate the bathhouse **OR** tear it down and rebuild it, depending on the economics of the alternatives. The renovated or rebuilt bathhouse would have the following features:
 - a. Functional and clean locker rooms/rest rooms with accessible toilets, sinks, and showers
 - b. Separate accessible rest room with shower for families and disabled patrons
 - c. Controlled access to pool past guard station
 - d. Snack bar with pavilion seating area
 - e. Manager’s office and guard room
 - f. Storage room (limited)
2. In conjunction with improvements to the bathhouse, we will consider improvements or enhancements to the baby pool located on the bathhouse level.

Priority 3: Accessibility Improvements

1. Consistent with DRRA's commitment to make its facilities accessible to all its members and guests, DRRA would make improvements to its grounds to allow for better access to facilities by disabled persons. Such improvements would also make it easier for families with young children to navigate our steeply-sloped property. Given the challenging topography of our site, we have potential options but not easy answers for accessibility to the bathhouse level and pool level of our premises:
 - a. Gentle sloping path around perimeter of grounds from parking lot to bathhouse and pool levels
 - b. Path with switchbacks and landings
 - c. Development of service driveway and rear access to pool level at back gate
 - d. As noted, the renovated/rebuild bathhouse will include accessible features

Priority 4: Grounds Improvements

1. Consistent with the overwhelming sentiment of our members to preserve Donaldson Run's uniquely beautiful landscape while also providing useable facilities and amenities for our members, the Planning Committee recommends consideration of the following grounds improvements:
 - a. Picnic area improvements that could include a covered picnic pavilion
 - b. Additional play features, such a swing set or shuffleboard deck
 - c. Terraced hillside overlooking the pool to provide seating and improved crowd management during swim and dive meets
 - d. Proactive tree and plantings management

Next Steps

The Planning Committee's recommended concept plan for facilities repairs and improvements provides a strong foundation for a final plan to be implemented over the next year or two. The Planning Committee's concept plan has been unanimously endorsed by the DRRA Board of Directors and by the members present at the annual membership meeting held on December 8, 2010 . But before the concept plan can be converted into an action plan, more work remains.

The Board of Directors will schedule a special DRRA members meeting approximately three (3) months from now during which it will present to the members for consideration and approval a final facilities repair and improvement plan based on the Planning Committee's concept plan. The proposal will include cost estimates based on feedback from design and construction professionals. Between now and that meeting, the Planning Committee will solicit additional member comments on the facilities repair and improvement plan, continue to refine the plan, identify specifications for repairs and improvements, and obtain cost estimates.

The final plan also will include a plan to fund the facilities repairs and improvements through existing financial reserves and other funding sources, which could include member assessments, bank loans, dues surcharges, or other mechanisms. The Planning Committee will explore the available funding alternatives and provide the members, in advance of the meeting, with a detailed explanation and analysis of the proposed funding plan.

Our goal is to obtain member approval of a facilities repair and improvement plan during early 2011, use the Spring and Summer seasons of 2011 for design, engineering, and permitting work, and commence work on the projects following the closing of the pool in September 2011. With a lot of work, we are optimistic that we will open the 2012 swim season with new and improved facilities.

Contact Information

The Planning Committee and the Board of Directors wants your feedback. Please provide it using any of the following contacts:

By email to the planning committee or DRRA president:

planning@drra.org or president@drra.org

By phone to Mike Griffen: (571) 766-8829

In person to any facilities planning committee member:

Mike Griffen, Patricia Connally, David Rehr, Bill Cowden, Julie Cox, Jo-Anne Goldman, Laurel Vogelsang, Laura Wiberg

Conclusion

Over fifty years ago, Donaldson Run's founders build a swim facility that has given its members and guests countless hours of enjoyment. Donaldson Run's current members are stewards of that legacy and we have a responsibility to undertake the significant long term repairs and improvements needed to enhance the experiences of current members and guests and to allow future generations to experience what we enjoy. We look forward to working with our members in that effort.