

LETTERS

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thinking the remaining voter bloc would favor high density and a weakening of anti-crime measures, measures which were successful and race-neutral. The city just closes its eyes as ARHA acquires additional properties here.

Council as well as the present and past mayors lack the commitment and skill involved in problem solving and consensus building. They allow an increasingly politicized planning staff to do their thinking for them. The city lacks the fortitude to stand up to ARHA, whose intransigence is well known to staff and citizens alike.

There are veteran Alexandria leaders who know how to restore the standards of the past. Before retiring, former Commonwealth's Attorney Randy Sengel and APD Captain Bill Johnson cited research about the danger of piling on more density in a neighborhood with "pockets of poverty." Chief Cook uncomfortably acknowledged these pockets of poverty last Friday.

The current crop of politicos bury their heads in the sand, preferring to cultivate self-interested citizens, developers and architects; to form front groups that support the city's

dubious theory that development, not off-siting, will diminish crime. One such group is newly established, an association which represents itself as pro-development and supports such expanded projects as the Bradley and Ramsey Homes despite strong opposition from the neighbors of both sites. With retailers now nervous, how long before we have another, still-ailing Braddock Place.

It looks like the summer of 2016 will be even hotter than anticipated.

Leslie Zupan
Alexandria

Benefits of New Pool

To the Editor:

In a letter to the editor from last week's edition of the Alexandria Gazette Packet ["Government Over-reach"], Jimm Roberts is critical about several things in Alexandria. One of those happens to be the new 50-meter indoor pool that will be built at Chinquapin. While there is little likelihood of changing Mr. Roberts' mind, his letter presents a great opportunity to boast about the benefits of that

new pool.

Here are some of the positives of that new year-round pool:

- ❖ The latest recreation needs assessment by the city shows the need for more swimming pools to be one of the highest unmet demands of city residents.

- ❖ In the latest media survey of city residents, 76 percent of the respondents favored building the new pool at Chinquapin.

- ❖ Both of these survey results highlight the fact that our residents appreciate the health and lifestyle benefits of swimming pools. Exercising in water is an activity that anyone can do at almost any age and learning to swim can save your own life and maybe others. What better use of the city's money than to keep children and adults healthy and safe?

- ❖ Our group – the Advocates for Alexandria Aquatics – is working with the city and others, such as INOVA Alexandria Hospital and the Alexandria City Public Schools, to teach all kids in Alexandria how to swim. To do that, we need more pool space, which the new pool will provide. We estimate that approximately 7,500 kids in our public schools cannot swim (about 50 percent).

- ❖ One of the benefits of a large,

indoor pool is the wide range of activities that it can support — from recreational lap swimming to competitive high school meets for our local schools (which currently rent space in other jurisdictions just to have a "home" meet), to water aerobics for seniors, to water polo matches and kayak lessons, to therapy sessions and prenatal and postnatal classes, and to Special Olympics training and scuba diving. What other recreational facility offers such a range of great activities?

- ❖ Our group is a microcosm of those uses and interests. We have members who use the existing pool for therapy sessions and lap swimming for fitness; we have others who take their kids and grandchildren to learn how to swim or just play in the water; we have youth and adult competitive swimmers and triathletes; we have parents of high school swimmers and kids who swim in recreation leagues; we have members who play water polo; you name it, and we probably have someone in our group who does it. We all share one observation – there is not enough pool capacity in Alexandria for

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everyone to participate in these activities. A consultant for the city estimates that the current pools only meet 20 percent of the potential demand.

❖ A well-run pool can generate revenue for the city when swim meets are held here. The city is targeting an 80 percent cost recovery of pool costs — we expect that it can be even higher with judicious use of naming rights to pool features. That's hardly a drain on the city's budget for all of the benefits that our residents will experience.

❖ We have already been approached about resident and employee wellness programs being established at the new pool. With the proper marketing, it can be a very positive selling point for living in Alexandria.

There are many more advantages to the new pool, but the weather is perfect and Mr. Roberts' letter has me thinking about swimming with my grandchildren. See you at the pool!

William Rivers
Chair, Advocates for Alexandria Aquatics

Design Change Unsettling

To the Editor:

A lack of transparency and violations of trust are poisonous to community life. Yet

that is exactly what the Alexandria School Board has done in favoring a design for the expansion of Patrick Henry school and recreation center after stakeholders had agreed on a different design.

After months of deliberations by the Patrick Henry Advisory Group in which compromises were made on all sides, a vote was overwhelmingly for Design C-1, one that balanced the desires of the community and the needs of the school. Earlier the School Board had indicated its favor for C-1 and ACPS staff had endorsed it. It seem that the system had worked and plans for the expansion could move ahead smoothly.

Then suddenly, "out of the blue," the School Board Chair, Ms. Graf, announced that the rejected design, A-1, would be chosen instead. Subsequently by a vote of 6-2, the School Board went along. The reason given was that A-1 was estimated to cost between \$1.5 and \$2 million less than C-1 — a fraction of the total project cost. But that rationale was undermined when the Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Crawley, advised the board that he could not be certain that there would not be changes to make A-1 eventually more costly than C-1.

Clearly something unknown is driving the decision toward A-1. Rejecting as it does what had been widely agreed after months of discussion, this decision appears arbitrary and capricious on the part of Ms. Graf and the board. Citizens all over Alexandria have a right to be concerned, if not outraged, by this result. Let us hope that the mayor and



PHOTO BY LAURA MAE SUDDER

Playing Catch

Blue plays Frisbee with Abby Desjardins at the dog park by the Windmill Hill Park area.

City Council, who previously have taken considerable interest in the Patrick Henry project, will weigh in on the side of maintaining the trust and support of all

Alexandrians on this issue.

Jack Sullivan
Alexandria

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