

To Answer Frequently Asked Questions about the Proposed Indoor Recreation Facility

When, how and why did this get started?

In late 2007 and early 2008 the Reston Association (RA) Board was exploring the possibility of enclosing tennis courts for year-round play and also looked at the possibility of enclosing a pool for year-round use. Graphics of some of these concepts were prepared by Urban, Ltd. Shortly thereafter then Reston Community Center (RCC) Board of Governors Chair, Bill Bouie, and RA Board of Directors President, Robin Smyers, discussed the organizations' respective futures in the summer of 2008. They discovered areas of shared concern, as well as the perceptions of other community organizations that RA and RCC should work together more. To facilitate pursuit of shared efforts, they scheduled a joint Board meet and greet with members of each organization's senior staff team on July 7th prior to the regular monthly meeting of the RCC Board of Governors that same evening. Discussion quickly led to articulated desire from both groups to look at the possibility of working together to fulfill the desires of many residents of Reston for more indoor recreation facilities. A Joint Task Force, comprised of Board members of each organization, was formed and began meeting in September 2008.

Both organizations have known for years that the levels of demand for our resources have far out-stripped our ability to fulfill them. RCC has had waitlists for aquatics classes that date back to very nearly the first year of our operations. Pool usage is at a maximum of the capacity and we turn people away during the peak use timeframes for the Terry L. Smith Aquatics Center. Similarly, fitness and well-being classes offered by RCC are consistently filled and there are waitlists. For years as part of our community relations and program/policy meetings, members of the public have besieged various Boards of Governors to build a gymnasium complex on the back of this building; a project that is not feasible due to the parking restrictions for the Hunters Woods property. We also are unable to meet demand for performing arts and meeting space. Every year, literally several hundred requests to use our meeting space are turned down and our local arts groups have not been able to schedule more activity as they compete with other users for the community room.

What prompted involvement of a consultant?

Given that both Boards had user data, surveys and studies that supported their beliefs that residents in Reston desired more indoor recreation options, we felt that it would be an additional benefit to have an in-depth analysis of the market and financial feasibility issues related to building new indoor recreation amenities. Research of available providers of these services led the group to the firm of Brailsford and Dunlavy. Each organization, in their usual public meetings, determined that they would share the costs of a comprehensive study, 50/50. Both Boards believed it prudent to hire a consultant for this work well in advance of either Board considering large expenditures for any additional indoor facility.

Each organization pursued other research with respect to:

- Potential locations; plusses and minuses (Browns Chapel, North County Government property, Baron Cameron Park, other RA locations such as Lake Newport Pool, etc.—RA will discuss this more in depth at their district meetings.)

- Financing issues: RCC Bond Referendum requirements; related costs. RCC never contemplated any new building without a capital bond referendum going before the taxpayers.
- Potential operational issues; this is the reason that RCC staff (and RA staff for tennis) prepared hypothetical programming options to illustrate how new facility options would address our existing waitlists and provide new programming.
- A community engagement process which began with focus groups last year and continues so robustly through the summer. RCC will conduct the biennial community survey this fall to get more in depth understanding of the community's opinions.

What decisions have been made?

The only decisions made so far have been:

RA and RCC decided to collaborate in seeking information about and perhaps using respective resources to build new indoor recreation capacity.

RCC decided to fund the purchase of the consultants work for a cost of 50% of the fee to RA, up to and not exceeding \$50,000.00; that cost is approximately \$40,000.00.

RA/RCC will engage the community in obtaining input on the idea of additional indoor recreation for Reston and the consultant's report in June and July public meetings and hearings as well as focus group sessions. The consultant report will be shared with any group requesting a presentation and the opportunity to provide input.

RCC will conduct its biennial community survey with this issue and related matters as the focus. This survey is done by the Center for Survey Research at the University of Virginia and typically involves telephone sampling to obtain replies from a statistically valid demographic sample of small district 5. The design of the sampling techniques this year will include provisions to help us capture the growing number of people who rely solely on cell phones for their telephone needs, which is a disproportionate share of younger demographic profiles. Furthermore, we will review the issues we seek responses to with community input prior to undertaking the sample. We seek the community's opinions about locations, size, and priorities for various components of indoor facilities, as well as whether or not RCC should even pursue such an endeavor. We will include questions about the small district 5 tax rate and whether or not people would prefer using resources to continue to expand programs and facility features or to reduce the tax rate. The RCC Board will review all of the community input from the summer and the survey before making any decision to pursue a new building or buildings. RCC will continue its current Capital Improvement Plan for our existing facilities regardless of the community sentiment concerning new facilities. RCC went into this process committed to the principle of any new facility development being feasible within the resources anticipated at the current tax rate and accompanying growth in the small district 5 tax base.

And yes, it is true that in April, RA discussed and RCC Board members moved to have any new facility that might be built named the Robert E. Simon Recreational Center. Given the celebrations this year of Reston's founding 45 years ago, and the April 95th birthday of our founder, the members of the two Boards wanted to acknowledge and honor Mr. Simon in this way.

Why are there drawings of a recreation facility at Brown's Chapel?

The Brown's Chapel site offered the opportunity to explore concept plans for several different sized footprints for an indoor recreational facility, including one with the building and required parking jointly placed on Brown's Chapel and Baron Cameron Park. Brown's Chapel is one of RA's largest community-wide parks with existing active recreation uses. There are drawings showing the topography of the two properties and how a footprint on them would relate to the surroundings and the existing amenities offered by both sites. These drawings and many others are presently available on RA's web site and will be displayed as part of the presentations at their district meetings that are scheduled for June and July.

How much money has been spent so far on this effort?

RCC will spend half of the costs of the report from Brailsford and Dunlavey. Based on the expected invoice from RA, that cost will be \$ 39,798.03. RCC has not spent or obligated any money beyond this to date.

Why was the December draft report from Brailsford and Dunlavey posted on the RCC web site and then taken off of it?

Quite simply, this was a mistake. RCC staff inadvertently posted a draft document that was a work in progress and that had not been completed, reviewed, and edited by the authors and clients. It was a working document that was disseminated to assist the Task Force and both Boards and staffs with an in-depth discussion of the issues related to a new facility and to begin to a prioritization process based on very preliminary data.

Does the study show that the majority of users will be from outside Reston?

Admittedly, the tables showing market data on users have to be explained followed by studying the information closely. However, we wanted to know market demands both inside and outside Reston and to be able to consider the respective results in light of our desired policy toward use and whether or not it made sense to proceed. We asked Brailsford and Dunlavey to base the financial projections for operating costs and revenues on the assumption that 90% of users would be from Reston (residents/employees.) RCC presently incorporates the same assumption for its usage rates for the Terry L. Smith Aquatics Center and most of our classes. Similarly, RA's non-resident use is around 10%, depending upon the program.

The two sets of tables are not related to each other. The market data is provided so we would know whether or not policies designed to give priority use, rates and opportunities for the proposed facility to Reston users would be a sustainable policy, and if there is sufficient market interest beyond Reston that would support substantially higher rates.

Why would the Reston community pay for an indoor recreational facility instead of the County?

Reston has always paid for recreational amenities desired by the community that exceed those in other parts of the County, or those provided to RA by the developer; for their greater investment, Restonians receive priority access and pay lower fees to use Reston amenities. However, Reston is certainly not alone in paying above and beyond County

property taxes for amenities the community has wanted. There is another small tax district with similar purposes in the County to serve the desires of the people in McLean. Similarly, the people of Herndon and Vienna also pay more for amenities in their communities than just their Fairfax County property taxes.

Does Fairfax County Government provide any recreation amenities to Reston?

Reston benefits from considerable County support for our community's recreation and leisure pursuits. Fairfax County paid for the construction of and continues to operate the Southgate Community Center. Additionally, the County finances the operations of the RecPac programs in Reston schools, the Teen Center housed at the YMCA, and the School Age Child Care programs in Reston elementary schools. Lake Fairfax Park, which is located in Reston and operated by the County Park Authority, offers a diverse array of recreational features, including plans for a Skate Park. Other County park amenities in Reston include the South Lakes Drive Park, Reston North Park, Baron Cameron Park, Stuart Road Park, and the Merrybrook Run Stream Valley Park. The Park Authority recently proposed improvements at Stratton Woods Park, which would include lights for the tennis courts and ball field, parking lot lights, a new picnic shelter, and new handball/racquetball courts. Reston Youth Baseball will benefit from approximately \$300,000 in improved concession and hospitality amenities from Fairfax County Park Authority improvements to Crabtree District Park at Crossfield Elementary School.

What has been Supervisor Hudgins' role in this?

Supervisor Hudgins has not been involved in these efforts. She is informed by RCC and by many people in Reston of the discussion elements and opinions people have. This has been an undertaking of RCC and RA.

Why do the financial plans described in the study show operating losses of about \$800,000 to \$1,000,000 annually?

The operating policy for RCC is to use the resources of tax revenues and related interest to subsidize our programs, services and facility costs. This fulfills the purposes for which the small district was formed. The same principle would apply to a new facility built/operated by RCC. This same principle underlies all public amenities; for example, people who pay for schools but who do not have children don't receive a direct benefit per se from those tax dollars, just as those whose children are in school do not pay the direct costs for the basic instruction their children receive but may pay out-of-pocket for special or extra-curricular programs above the core instructional offerings. RCC operates under the premise that the taxes that support it afford all of Reston's residents and businesses a better quality of life which contributes to the value of being here.

Is RCC going to try to build something without getting the community's consent?

Absolutely not! If the results of our meetings and the survey this fall indicate the community does not support building a new facility, the Board will not pursue the project, but will instead look for other ways to address the needs expressed to date and in the survey results.