

September 9, 2005

Lauren Bornfriend
Executive Director
The Philadelphia Parks Alliance
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Re: Parks Alliance Petition

Dear Lauren,

The Design Advocacy Group (DAG) convened a Task Force in August to discuss a proposed bill introduced into City Council that calls for the abolition of the Fairmount Park Commission and the consolidation of its operation into the Department of Recreation. We developed a 'briefing paper' that was the subject of an extended and thoughtful discussion at the most recent DAG meeting held on September 8, 2005.

During that meeting, it was the overwhelming sense of those present that DAG should sign on to the Parks Alliance petition asking that the proposed legislation be delayed so that the public has time to understand the consequences of the proposal. Our Steering Committee, which sets DAG policy, concurs. This letter formally authorizes the Parks Alliance to include our name on the list of groups that support your initiative.

Further, we appreciate the leadership that the Parks Alliance has provided in mobilizing the shared concerns of many in our community about the future of our park system. Your points have been well reasoned and articulated. However, we do wish to point out that the Alliance's points were written prior to the appointment of Mark Focht as Executive Director. It can now be stated that the Park Commission is lead by someone extremely knowledgeable about the parks, park conservation and park operations.

One of the great disappointments of the proposed legislation is that it does not articulate a vision for how the parks will improve. DAG intends to speak out on this issue and will, in the coming weeks and months, offer our thoughts on the specific design and quality of life issues that we feel are critical regardless of governance structure.

Many of our members are very well versed on the parks. Several of them were involved in the creation of the Strategic Plan. They are highly motivated to be involved in what we hope will be a substantive public discussion about the future of the parks. Therefore, please be assured of our continued interest in working with you and the Parks Alliance.

The proposed legislation has had one very positive consequence. Council has put the issue squarely on the agenda. It is now up to all of us to keep it there and help formulate proposals to return our park system to its former greatness.

Sincerely,

Alan Greenberger, Vice Chair
On behalf of the Design Advocacy Group

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